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STUDIES IN BOARD SCHOOLS



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BY
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STUDIES IN BOARD SCHOOLS

THE WILD BOYS OF WALWORTH

ONE afternoon a small matter of business called me across the Thames, and I lost myself amongst a multitude of byways. All roads lead to 'The Elephant' in this part of London, but after making polite inquiries for that famous landmark from a butcher, a baker, a greengrocer, and a young lady of five, who was picking a winkle out of its shell with a crooked hairpin, I still found myself groping in the wilderness, when I suddenly stumbled into the middle of a miserable street full of the wildest little ruffians. It was a veritable Pandemonium, and every moment I expected to be assaulted with a mud-pie, or be ordered to get my hair cut—though I had not long visited the barber. But retreat was impossible, and I trembled as visions arose of the bloodthirsty Pirates of the

Wandle, the Junior Kelly Gang, the Bold Brotherhood of Buffalo Bills—have not the nefarious doings of those famous bands of boys been chronicled in many a news-sheet? Slowly I advanced through the tumultuous throng, taking courage as no young Turpin bailed me up, when a shrill whistle assailed my ears, and lo! every boy—a hundred ragamuffins (I use the word in a genial sense)—stood stock still and silent as stone. On looking round, not a little startled, I saw the enchanter with the whistle at his mouth. He was standing at the doors of what I took to be a chapel by its pillars and sombre front, but on going up to make inquiries I soon learnt the explanation of the strange scene. The building had, indeed, been a chapel, but was now one of Her Majesty's Board schools, whilst the enchanter with the whistle, who had made those lively boys as stone, was its headmaster—Mr. Jackman. He laughed when I told him of my fears, and admitted that at one time—not so very long ago—they might have had some foundation. 'But their manners have improved a little. They were wild enough once on a time, I can promise you.' The whistle then sounded again, the figures of stone were ragamuffins full of sport and spirits, and once more din of Babel filled the street. 'It is our only playground,' said Mr. Jackman, giving me his ear once more. 'And this building, once an old

chapel, is our school until the new one is ready for us.'

Here, then, was a little light on the black spot—the first glimmering rays playing on to one of the darkest patches on Mr. Charles Booth's maps of the metropolis.

It was by this chance that I began these modest studies in Board Schools.

Up with the curtain—let us begin.

A few days after the school was opened in this miserable street the headmaster was standing at the door waiting for the caretaker, when a boy marched up to him, bold as brass: 'I sy, 'guv'nor, when does the show begin?' Never once he blinked, that audacious boy. Naught he knew of masters and canes and ferules. The only man he cared about was the awful embodiment of the law, known in these black spots as 'the copper.' But, like little Johnny Jones, 'he knows now.' He used strong language—naughty words which even grown-up people would blink at; sulphurous words, and the very biggest D's, I was assured. He smoked to the very door, aye, puffed his smoke in the very teacher's nose. He broke windows. He cut his neighbour's buttons off. He stole (I will tell you a story or two in a minute which will make your hair stand on end)—apples, Slim Jim (a species of gummy sweetmeat much beloved by the youth of

this quarter); nay, even the cats'-meat man was not safe from his depredations. He thought nothing of snatching the poor cat's dinner from her and swallowing it himself. Of course he was very hungry, but that was no excuse, was it?—I ask you, you good little boys and girls who never do wrong and always eat a big dinner.

And now for a story or two. One young man (rising ten) was so voracious that he actually turned burglar and forger too, to supply his wants. One bitter winter's day, when the snow was on the ground and the wind was blowing cold, this little boy remained in the schoolroom, toasting himself by the fire. He peered into the flame, watched the smoke curling up the chimney, and seemed to be lost to all mundane things. But all the time his mind was full of schemes. When all the other boys had gone out to play, he might have been seen (only no one was there to see him) creeping stealthily to the headmaster's desk, with the poker clasped tight in his little fingers. With this instrument he soon succeeded in bursting open the desk, where he found a package of fifty dinner tickets. With a wicked smile upon his tiny face, he seized a pen, dipped it into his master's ink-bottle, and copied in infantile curves his master's signature. With his booty he then sallied forth into the streets, and dined copiously, I believe.

But, as the copybook truly hath it, 'Thy sin will find thee out.' His stomach full, he desired to have money wherewith to visit the playhouse—'Sixteen-string Jack' was running at the time. So he went into the market-place and began calling out his dinner tickets: 'Only a farden! only a farden!' which was half price, a halfpenny being their face value. He was caught, and what they did with him—well, never mind. 'Whacky—whack—whack'—let those suggestive syllables suffice. 'Whacky—whack—whack,' and durance vile.

Then, again: One night a good costermonger and his lady retired to rest, and put five pounds and some odd shillings, carefully tied up in a baby's stocking, under the mattress. He sold vegetables on a barrow, and was a very hard-working man indeed, and this money was all he had in the world to buy stock with. But before the good couple had slept very long they were awakened by a thud and a loud cry in the next room. Both at once jumped up, and ran to see what was the matter, for three of the family slept there, and one of them had evidently tumbled out of bed. Whilst they had gone, their son—a hopeful youth of twelve, who slept in the corner of his parents' room—swiftly withdrew the stocking, stole downstairs, and went out into the night. The poor, hard-working

costermonger and his lady were in a terrible way when they discovered the theft in the morning, and at once began to hunt high and low for their boy. But he was enjoying himself right well with one or two bosom friends. Quite a royal time they had of it—eating and drinking, seeing the sights, visiting the Crystal Palace, taking round journeys on the Underground Railway, patronising the play-houses. Whether you be glad or sorry, I have to tell you that they were caught before all the money was done, and loud again were heard the sounds of ‘Whacky—whack—whack!’

Those were the wild Walworth boys a few short months ago! Ah, what changes have come over them since this chapel-school opened wide its big front door! Far be it from me, a veracious person, to say that they are wholly perfect yet. Does anybody ever attain to that admirable state? Did even little George Washington himself, that paragon who never told a lie? Even he, I very much suspect, was not more than mortal, though the stories which our good cousins across the water tell of him are endless.

No. The truant is still abroad—I was introduced to two or three of them. Their manners would have done credit to Mr. Turveydrop; their imaginations lively; their excuses most ingenious. They were really capital company. Take Tom

Tipping's case. Tom lifted his cap politely, bowed, and sirred me till I was quite abashed. Never once did he say 'guv'nor,' nor let fall a D, big or little, nor use such words as bloke or cop (which are not to be found in any dictionary, you know), and even when he was taken with a severe fit of sneezing in the middle of our conversation he produced a handkerchief. To be sure, it was only the leg of a stocking, but he did his best. Tom was a big boy of thirteen, who, I regret to say, was still only in words of two syllables. He had a pair of roving black eyes, a curly nose, a nice fringe drooping over his forehead, and a mobile laughing mouth, his chief garment being a long overcoat which reached nearly to his ankles. On the whole, he rather reminded me of the Artful Dodger without his guile. Now, why did Tom play truant? For the very best of reasons, as it seemed to him. Tom wanted to go hopping, and his father not only declined to give his permission, but promised him a good hiding if he went without it. But as his father made a particular point of giving him a hiding about three times a week, to say nothing of an extra one on Saturday night, he went.

'What, all alone, Tom?' I asked.

'No, sir. Me and Bob Duffy' (nodding at Bob, who was not far away).

'Did you walk down?'

‘Yuss.’

‘And how much did you bring home?’

‘Five shillins’, sir.’ Mark you, he did not make use of such low words as ‘bob.’

‘Half-a-crown each! And did you get the hiding?’

‘No, sir’ (and Bob laughed from ear to ear as he murmured)—‘I guv the half-crown to faver.’

Then I talked to Tom’s friend Bob Duffy, who, I am sorry to have to say it, is a noted truant. It is not only during the hopping and fruiting season—when even the sternest master is obliged to relax his discipline a little—that Master Duffy mysteriously disappears. Not long ago he was fascinated by the martial strains of a band which happened to be passing through the streets, and followed it about the town for a day or two. On the last occasion recorded he went because his mother’s injustice rankled in his mind. He had picked up a sixpence. She ordered him to give it up. He declined, and ran off at a speed which rendered it impossible for his parent—a good woman of corpulent habit—to catch him. He stopped away till the sixpence was gone, taking comfortable lodgings at night in an empty cart he knew of; but on what terms Mrs. Duffy consented to receive her erring offspring I was unable to elicit.

Now, those are just a couple of isolated cases. But to show you how the wind blows now I will tell you another story.

The other day one Johnny Sheppard, aged eleven, stole the rent which his mother had carefully put away in the teapot. A sum of three shillings and sixpence it was. The young fellow then set out in search of his bosom friend James Blueskin, and the two went off to see the gay sights of the metropolis, winding up a pleasant day at the Surrey Theatre. After the play was over they went comfortably to sleep in an empty house they knew of, and in the morning washed at an adjacent pump, breakfasted on Slim Jim (that sweetmeat I have already mentioned), and then went—to the very last place in which you or any other sane person would have thought of looking for them. They went to school—this very place where I now was. ‘Muvver will never come here,’ young Master Sheppard had reasoned with himself, being well aware that Mrs. Sheppard was much averse to such institutions. But, alas! muvver did come—though ‘stark, staring wild’—as the old song goes—she had hunted high and low for him, and as a forlorn hope ran him to earth at school.

Yes—she is all for schools now—things are quickly changing in this neighbourhood.

When the new school opened in the New Year,

four was the first day's attendance. And for many, many days they crept unwillingly to school. But they come gladly now as to a friendly oasis in the desert of brick—a hundred or more. To be sure, the whipper-in with his Argus eyes is always on the watch; the supple emblem of order hangs in sight of all, though it is like to become dusty from little usage. But no longer is the master an ogre, or merely the administrator of 'Whacky-whack-whack'—which, strange to say, these hardy Arabs fear and hate. Though he will assuredly punish the wicked—the thief, the liar, the user of bad language, the truant—yet as certainly will he reward the virtuous. Let us see what habits of obedience, a little order and discipline have instilled into those unruly ragamuffins, who not long ago were running wild—or most of them.

Sharp and shrill blows the whistle again; the ten minutes are up; stiff as stone stand the boys; again sounds the whistle, and into school they march like young soldiers—right, left, right, left, wheel, forward—march to their seats in the body of the chapel school. The autumn sun shot a warm shaft into the room; a cheerful fire burnt in the stove; the walls were covered with coloured pictures of birds and animals; ships at sea—maps and charts; some prize exercises on copybook and slate—with the Government mark upon them—

hung prominently so that all could see ; here and there from pegs and nails depended ears of wheat, bunches of hops, which had been laid at the Master's feet by affectionate pupils. It was a cheerful scene, though wild of eye, low of brow, stunted in growth, pallid of face, were many of these Arabs who filled the benches. Some the gods must love, for death has already marked them for his own. Some will surely take to evil ways, for Cain has stamped them with his indelible mark ; some will assuredly be crushed in the great fight, poor weaklings—but there is many a young hopeful amongst them, with bright eyes and open countenance, who will do credit to his masters, and bless the day when he was caught and tamed.

Why, I was actually presented to a real little hero. I know not what his name may be. A mite of a boy he is, about ten years of age ; so shy, so modest—and modesty is a quality which is not too common with heroes. I have known many of them. Three small lives has he saved ; thrice has he plunged fearlessly into the black depths of the canal upon whose banks he resides. In fitful murmurs, with eyes cast down, he lisped unwillingly his gallant deeds into my ear. One was a boy who had sunk twice, and was just disappearing for the third and fatal time when my hero seized him by the hair, and putting forth all his strength brought

him safe to the bank. How he raised him to that elevation I could not gather. Another was a foolish boy who had got out of his depth. A third was a little girl.

Surely the little man is worthy of a medal! Like a sucking Nelson, he cannot know what fear is!

It happened that the singing lesson of half-an-hour was the next in the day's roll of work, and I was astonished to hear how sweetly the young Walworthians rendered a song in four parts, which they had been taught by the tonic sol-fa system. But singing is popular. With what martial fervour they gave 'Tommy Atkins!' And then we had Tennyson's 'Dora'—you may remember how that hard-hearted Farmer Allan insisted that William, his son, should marry Dora, his niece. But—as you may also remember—William declined, and was accordingly turned out of the house. It fell to my friend Tom Tipping to personate poor William, and never shall I forget the peremptory way in which that ragged urchin in the long overcoat and the two odd boots declaimed:

'I cannot marry Dorer; by my life I WILL NOT MARRY DORER.'

Poor Dora! He stamped his boot so that his toes came clean through the leather.

His friend Bob Duffy was Farmer Allan.

Little Bob's eyes started out of his head, so enraged was he, as he turned round upon William and cried :

'You will not, boy!'—with what unmeasured contempt he hissed out 'boy!'—'you dare to answer thus! But in my time (here he rapped his knuckles on the hard desk) a father's word was law!' This was altogether too much for my gravity. The idea of Bob—notoriously indifferent to parental admonitions—coming out so strong! But he regarded me with a frown and went on in even sterner accents than before : 'Look to it (and he looked at me as if I was William); consider, William :

take a monf to fink,
An' let me have (*very strong aspirate*) an answer to my
wish;
Or, by the Lord (*Lord tremendously emphasised*) that made
me, you shall PACK,
And never more darken my doors again.

The effect was terrific. Poor little Bob! I thought he would have burst the only button that held his clothes together.

Such lessons as singing and recitation come as pleasant breaks between the severer courses of reading and arithmetic. But I saw one class of tiny fellows following with keen attention a map of

the English railways and the remarks of the teacher thereon; and another greatly interested in an object-lesson. The common house-fly was the object in hand, and his various parts were neatly depicted in chalk on a big black board. They were all absorbed in his thousand eyes, his feet all hairy, by which our familiar friend is able to walk upside down on the ceiling, and in other precarious positions. But, common though he was, yet how wondrously made! A thousand eyes! All from a tiny, tiny egg! And yet he was only one of the millions of God's marvellous creations—not one so marvellous as man. Boys, think of that! Be careful, then, of your most wonderful bodies; abuse them not with drink, and wicked ways. And so on.

It struck me as being a very effective lesson; pretty as a fable; and picturesque enough to rivet those wild eyes upon the board and the teacher's ferule.

You may think any allusion to drink uncalled for, but few are the children who have not suffered from it in such black spots. I was shown an entry in the log-book to the effect that one John Smith—of nine or ten—*came to school hopelessly drunk, and almost insensible*. At the time it was impossible to ascertain the facts, but it appears that he was taken by some men on a van, and they did make him drink.

These tempters were the product of the pre-Board-school epoch, when darkness was upon the land.

A few minutes later the steady tramp of many feet resounded through the chapel-school; the sombre street was alive again, work was done for the day, the whistle was locked up, I bade the Master good-night, and went my way, feeling a profound respect for the work of such a one.

‘The Elephant’ was close to after all—‘The Elephant’ to which all roads lead—all aflame already, seething, roaring with multitudinous life.

CITIZEN CARROTS

ALLOW me to introduce to you Citizen Carrots—a freckle-faced boy of twelve, rather ragged, with holes in his shoes, a red muffler round his neck, a thick wispy crop of red hair on his head, a pair of pallid cheeks, and two weary blue eyes. He and I have arrived at the school-door together at a quarter to nine o'clock on this raw cold morning. Both of us are shivering, our teeth are chattering, our toes have disappeared, and we are half-choked by the white fog which almost hides Walworth in spectral gloom. It is certainly not nice weather for scholastic exercises.

‘A cold morning,’ I said, as cheerfully as I could.

‘Not so cold as it were at five o'clock, though,’ he answered knowingly.

‘At five o'clock—why—were you up at five o'clock? Sleeping out?’

‘No fear. I'm up every mornin' at five—bisness!’ Then he whistled.

‘Business?’

‘The noospaper bisness. I made sixpence commission afore breakfas’.’

Then Carrots looked longingly at a paper parcel which was protruding out of his breast pocket. ‘That’s my dinner,’ he said, thrusting it out of sight, with a sigh, as if he could well have devoured it for breakfast, and more too. But the next moment I heard a rustling about his stomach, and, looking in that direction with a sidelong glance, noticed that he was unbuttoning his waistcoat. There were three odd buttons—one bone, one mother of pearl, one of wood—and the rest were string. ‘Stock,’ he exclaimed, and began to count some morning papers which unfortunately he had not been able to dispose of. ‘I takes ’em back to the shop—they’re chance copies—I leaves ’em at folks’ ’ouses, you know—on commission—so the more I shoves bisness the more I gits.’

The young trader having counted his papers put them back in the place from whence they came, adjusted his garments, and proceeded to make up his accounts with a stumpy pencil in a greasy note-book. He then balanced his cash, which he carried in his bosom for safety, wrapped up in an old rag. The result was evidently satisfactory, for his brow cleared, and a pleasant smile flitted over his face. But at that moment a smaller edition of himself came running up and greeted him with a piping

‘Carrots.’ That was how I came to know his name.

‘Hullo! Billy’—then a look of disgust came over his expressive features as he cried in a voice hoarse from much business: ‘Why, Billy—my bruvver, Guv’nor—you ain’t ’alf dressed yourself,’—tying Billy’s neckcloth for him in a decent manner. ‘My!—an’ jest look at yer boots.’

Bill evidently stood in not a little awe of his elder brother.

‘I blakked ’em, I did,’ he whimpered.

‘It’s them mucky streets, then,’ cried Carrots, indignantly; they were indeed thick with mud. ‘They don’t ’arf clean ’em,’ he muttered, angrily. ‘Oh! jest wait till I’ve got a vote. I’ll make them vestries sit up, I will;’ and then, with a fraternal affection which was indeed remarkable, he spat on Billy’s boots, and proceeded to make them as presentable as possible.

I was, indeed, astonished to hear Carrots talking so freely about votes and vestries, but my reflections were speedily interrupted by the rising of the agile urchin from the ground with a: ‘There Billy—you’ll get a good mark for your boots, and don’t go a pickin’ out the muck to walk in—d’ye ’ear me? An’ how’s muvver?—muvver’s in bed wiv the roomatics, Guv’nor—’ he muttered to me in an aside, for he saw I was much interested in him.

'She's ony me and little Billy there—t'others has gone wheer I 'opes they'll git more grub than they had 'ere—and less roomatics—faver was in the street bisness—'awkin';' but more of the family history I did not hear, for nine o'clock struck, and he marched off into school.

Very drowsily did poor Carrots sing the morning hymn; those big eyes of his drooped; his head bobbed this way and that; his lips moved mechanically; and at the word 'Amen' he sank down into his seat and fell off into a dog's dose—one eye half open. Poor Carrots! he was very weary, and the warmth had got the better of his sense of duty. But it was only a temporary lapse. In a moment every hair of that red head stood on end, as he bobbed up at the sound of high voices without. 'A row!' I heard him say.

No—a poor mother weeping bitterly, and bringing a prodigal son back to the fold—one Phil Cutting. 'I wish he were dead—Lord forgive me, sir, but I do,' cried the poor woman to the master. 'I've buried ten, and only this and another's left, but I wish he were dead, I do. He's fast breakin' our 'ome up, he is. His father's lost two days' work a-lookin' for him.'

The filial Carrots, who, as I gathered later on, was the main support of his family (aided by a trifle from the parish) frowned in a Rhadamanthine

sort of way at the evil-doer. He was wide awake now, I assure you. With what glee did he follow the laggard footsteps of Phil Cutting—a sullen youth of ten, with a retreating brow which boded naught but evil—on his way to the stool of repentance! To the platform at the end of the room he was led by his master, and mounted a chair, where he remained head down, brooding, the observed of all of us. Ah! Carrots, harden not your heart so early; gird not at the sinner; turn not Pharisee. You—poor little drudge so willing, endowed with a thousand good qualities of heart and brain, pity Phil Cutting! From some ancestor—surely not from his anxious father nor from his weeping mother—has he got a crooked twist which may yet be straightened by patience, by kindness, by firmness. Do not surgical irons, wisely adjusted, strengthen many a crooked limb? But Phil is undoubtedly a bad subject. He is a chronic truant, a sleeper out. Yes—truant must be writ on his rebellious little heart. That organ was fluttering fiercely as a wild bird's newly caged; and yet his brain was surely at work. 'Is it to be a hidin' or not to be a hidin'?'—that was the question which I believe was buzzing like a thousand wheels through the windings of his tiny cerebellum. What furtive looks he cast at his master! How closely he followed his every movement about the plat-

form ! How fervently he said the Lord's Prayer ! I watched his little lips framing the sacred words : ' Our Father which art in Heaven—(gulp)—hallowed be Thy name—(gulp)—Thy kingdom come—Thy will be done '—(sob, sob, sob)—the little hands clasped tight within each other—(sob, sob, sob)—' Forgive us our trespasses ! ! ! '—a passionate glance at his master—' as we forgive them that trespass against us '—(sob, sob, sob). ' A '—gulp—' men ! ' (sob, sob, sob).

It was really quite a little drama ; thousands of them are daily being played upon these seamy stages which civilisation call Board schools.

Heaven only knows how it will all end ! But no one has any pity on Phil ; there he remains in spite of his very doubtful fervour. The first lesson of the day begins, and once more Carrots subsides into languor. The story of the Prodigal Son apparently fails to interest him, though it is admirably told. *He* is no prodigal, *he* has no father to kill the fatted calf for him. No, no ; what calf he has he pays for by his own strenuous efforts. Nay, is he not himself a parent, to all intents and purposes, with awful responsibilities ? I fear, indeed (judging by his gestures and asides), that he is rather inclined to agree with the good brother who had never done wrong, who had never squandered his father's money, who had never

played truant. Why should the prodigal get all the halfpence? Why? why? Was it fair? Carrots shrugged his shoulders, though a bit of an altruist himself. And the only response he made was a wicked wink at the awful example perched up aloft on the stool. He has a hard practical mind, which has been developed by circumstances. 'Let prodigals be punished,' I think he would say, if he gave his unbiassed opinion out of school.

But very different was his demeanour a few minutes later.

To the next lesson he was keenly alive; he sat upright, he squared his shoulders, his eyes grew bigger, his ears were wide open, his hand was even outstretched.

It was a lesson on RATES to these young citizens, with the altruistic text, ALL FOR EACH—EACH FOR ALL.

'Silence, please!' says the master, going up to the blackboard, and drawing upon it a series of rough sketches—in a minute or two I made out a regulation workhouse, a Board school, a free library, a lamp-post, a water-cart, a dustman, a policeman, a steam roller, a navy or two, and a long-handled shovel stuck in a heap of soil.

'The roads is up agin,' cried Carrots, now very wide awake indeed, his great eyes rolling round and round, his elbows planted on the hard desk,

his hands—black with printers' ink—dug into his cheeks. There was no need to call *him* to attention. His whole being was aflame; he was all eyes, all ears.

'Yes, the roads *are* up,' said the teacher, smiling at his favourite pupil. 'And why do they take the roads up?'

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 'They're drainin' the 'ouses.' | } | A chorus of answers. |
| 'They're puttin' the gas in.' | | |
| 'The main's busted and the | | |
| water's wastin'.' | | |

'Yes. Now what else do you see on the board?'

| | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------|
| 'A work'ouse.' | } | Chorus again. |
| 'A Board school.' | | |
| 'A water-cart.' | | |
| 'A dustman.' | | |

'That's right. Now, who pays for all of them? You know the dustman must live; and the man who drives the water-cart, and the horses that draw it along; and hundreds of poor people have a home in the workhouse without cost to themselves; and then there's the infirmary, where we can go to if we are sick and can't afford to call in a doctor ourselves; and then there's the school here, where you are taught for nothing. Now, who can tell me where the money comes from to pay for all these?'

‘Out o’ the rates,’ cries Carrots, his little fist extended.

A few, however, made a shot and cried ‘Taxes.’

‘No, no,’ from some voice.

‘The rates,’ shouted Carrots, literally bursting with information. ‘Please, sir, the taxes is for the soldiers, sailors, and the judges——’

‘Yes; that’ll do for the present; we shall come to the taxes another day, but the rates are used for local purposes. Now, who pays the rates?’

‘Us,’ said Carrots, first again.

‘Yes; but your mother doesn’t have a whole house, does she?’

‘No, sir, only one room among us,’ murmured Carrots with a frown.

‘And does the rate-collector ever come and ask her for money on quarter-day?’

‘No, sir.’

‘Well, then, how can you pay rates?’

‘We pays it in the rent, sir, to the landlord,’ said Carrots unfalteringly.

‘That’s quite right. You pay your share indirectly as much as anyone else—whether you live in a single room, as many of you do, or whether you have a whole house. But we don’t all pay the same, do we?’

‘No, sir’—chorus.

‘Well, how do the collectors know what to

charge us on those pieces of paper which they bring round to our houses every quarter or every half year ? ’

‘ It’s accordin’ to the rent we pays, sir,’ said Carrots, first in the field again.

‘ Yes ; according to the rateable value of our houses. Well—all listen carefully, please ’—for not all the class was so keenly interested in these matters as my little friend Carrots—‘ we will take the case of Mrs. Smith, who keeps the greengrocer’s shop round the corner. Let us say that the rateable value of her shop is 20*l.* a year. Now, let us see what sum she contributes to the public purse, into which the rates go—for the benefit of all of us—out of the profits of her greengrocery business.’

Then the teacher turns to the blackboard, and across his rough sketch of the workhouse—with a hint of an infirmary in the background—wrote the words ‘ Poor Rate.’

‘ Now,’ he went on, ‘ suppose the poor rate is two shillings in the pound, how much will Mrs. Smith have to pay ? ’

‘ Forty shillins,’ came the answer from at least half a dozen, without any hesitation.

‘ And if the rateable value of Mrs. Jones’ shop over the way is 10*l.*, how much will she pay ? ’

‘ Twenty shillins.’

‘And why should Mrs. Smith pay twice as much as Mrs. Jones?’

‘Cos she ’as a bigger shop,’ came the reply from the ready ones.

‘Well—but she pays twice the rent for it! Now, who can tell me why Mrs. Smith, although she pays more money for her shop, and is less likely to want relief from the parish, and very likely has a doctor of her own when she is not well, has to pay twice as much rates as Mrs. Jones, whose shop costs her 10*l.* a year? She gets no more for her forty shillings than Mrs. Jones does for her twenty shillings. Now—why is that?’

‘Oh! please sir, I know,’ said Carrots. ‘Cos she’s better off nor Mrs. Jones. She can afford it better.’

‘That’s right. Mrs. Smith is better off than her neighbour Mrs. Jones, so roughly speaking she pays according to her ability, not because she gets more value for her money at all—as I have told you, she gets less in all probability. So the idea is——?’

‘That she pays to help her porer neighbours,’ sung out Carrots again.

‘Yes—we have all to help each other. Always remember that on your way through life. Each for all—all for each. Now repeat those words: “Each for all—all for each.”’

‘ Well, now I see by this piece of blue paper that Mrs. Smith has to pay a shilling in the pound to the Vestry. How much is that ? Yes—twenty shillings. Now what does Mrs. Smith get for this money ? ’

‘ She gets her streets cleaned.’

‘ Yes, she gets the street she lives in cleaned, so that when she goes out she can walk along in comfort. Then if Mrs. Smith goes out at night she finds——? ’

‘ That the lamps are lighted.’

‘ Yes, so that she cannot miss her way. In the old days, before we all agreed to club together, the streets were quite dark after nightfall, and then what happened ? ’

‘ The people lost themselves.’

‘ Hurt themselves.’

‘ Got robbed.’

} All together.

‘ What else does Mrs. Smith get for her twenty shillings ? ’

‘ The dustman.’

‘ Yes, if we all had to clean our own rubbish away we should have no place to take it to, and it would be very inconvenient. Then some careless people might leave it to decay, and that would breed disease, and we should all suffer. So again we all club together and employ the dustman. And what else does Mrs. Smith get ? ’

‘ She gets her street repaired and drained.’

‘ Quite right. The drainage is very important for us all. Why is that ? ’

‘ ‘Cos they brings fevers.’

‘ And who comes to look at our houses to see that the drains are in proper order ? ’

‘ The sanitary inspector. He comes and smells.’

‘ And if any of you are ill—if the doctor says it is an infectious disease—what have you to do ? ’

‘ Stop at ‘ome, sir.’

‘ Why ? ’

‘ So as not to give it to others.’

‘ And when you are better, what is done ? ’

‘ The ‘ouse is disinfected.’

‘ Yes. Now many people who don’t think grumble when they have to pay their rates. They don’t seem to understand what the money is for. If you pay three pounds for a suit of clothes you see what you get. If you buy five shillings’ worth of meat you eat it. Well, and now you see when you go into the matter that after all Mrs. Smith—and everyone of us—get very good value for our money. Now there is a big building in the Walworth Road—who can tell me what that is ? ’

‘ The Free Library.’

‘ Yes ; and that is ours too. We all help to pay for it, and to buy the books, and to support the librarian, and so on. If Mrs. Smith pays a penny

in the pound rate for the Free Library, how much would that be? One and eightpence. Yes. And what does she get?’

‘Books to read for nuffin’,’ say some.

‘She can read the noospapers,’ exclaimed Carrots, who, as he had delivered a set of papers to that institution not so long ago, was well posted up for the occasion.

‘And what part of the newspapers do many poor people go to read in the libraries?’

‘The ’vertisements,’ said Carrots.

‘And why?’

‘To get work.’

‘Yes; if they are looking for a situation. And any of us can go and read there and learn many useful things. So that there again Mrs. Smith—though she may never go near the Library herself—at all events helps her poorer neighbours. Well—and then we come to the place we are now in—the Board school. There again we all agree to contribute to the education of everybody’s children, and whether Mrs. Smith has a child of her own or not she still pays her share—say sixpence in the pound—and again befriends her poorer neighbours. Then there are the police. Suppose the police rate is fivepence in the pound now, what will Mrs. Smith’s share be?’

‘Eight and fourpence,’ came the answer, very quickly.

‘And what does Mrs. Smith get for her money?’

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| ‘She gets her ’ouse protected.’ | } All together. |
| ‘She can sleep sound at night.’ | |
| ‘They runs ’em in when they do wrong.’ | |

‘Yes, they protect us in all sorts of ways. Then they regulate the traffic, and keep order in the streets, and those who do wrong——’

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| ‘They takes ’em to the magistrate.’ | } Another chorus. |
| ‘And he gives ’em a monf.’ | |
| ‘And stops faver givin’ muvver a ’idin’.’ | |

There was quite a variety of answers to this question. They all know the policeman.

‘And now if you reckon up all the various items which Mrs. Smith pays to the rate collector, you will see that, though it sounds a big sum of money, yet she really gets a great deal for it. She is protected from any harm; her property is safe; she can walk about the streets with comfort by day or night; her drains are seen to; her rubbish is taken away for her; she has books and newspapers to read; if she has ten children, she can have them well taught for nothing—so that if they are willing to learn, and attend school regularly, they can very easily make their own living when they grow up; if she is ill, she can go to the infirmary for medi-

cine ; and if, when she grows old, she is unable to pay rent or buy food or clothes, these things are provided for her.'

'And please, sir, the Parks,' interjected the eager Carrots.

'Yes, you have the Parks, too—those are maintained by what is called a County Rate. Mrs. Smith pays her share of that also, all of us do, and never forget that when you go into one of them. Remember that a park is for the benefit of all of us, and we should be careful of our property. A man or a boy would be very foolish, indeed, if he tore his own clothes up, wouldn't he? And so is the man or the boy who goes into a public park and treads on the flowers, and breaks down the boughs of the trees, or does any damage whatever. We should be very badly off, indeed, without these parks, shouldn't we? You can go and sit there in the fresh air, and watch the birds, and look at the beautiful flowers, play on the grass, and there is a gymnasium. However, we shall come to the parks some other day. We will see, too, *who* spends our money. We have some idea now as to how it goes, and now, as it is *our* money, which we have to earn, we very naturally want to inquire about those who spend it. Who *does* spend it? Do any of you know?'

Carrots knew.

‘ Vestrymen and Guardians,’ he shouted.

‘ Quite right. We choose them from amongst ourselves—those we all think will spend our money to the best advantage. And *how* do we choose them ? ’

‘ Vote for ’em,’ says Carrots.

‘ And who’ll have votes in time to come ? ’

‘ Us,’ cried that notable boy again.

‘ Yes, and presently we’ll have an election amongst ourselves. You shall all vote, and we’ll see who’s the best boy in the school.’

I knew now how my red-haired friend came to be so free with his criticisms on the state of the streets. Votes and Vestries !—in a year or so, when he sets up in business, that precocious Arab will be a well-equipped citizen. He will not only vote, but he will know what he is voting for, and why he is voting, and will be well able to criticise the affairs of his district.

‘ Poor Carrots ! After the excitement of his favourite lesson, swiftly came the reaction. His eyes were shut, his mouth was open, his head lay upon the desk—he was sound asleep. Poor weary little bread-winner—poor Citizen Carrots ! Short has been his life, but already he knows of his own little knowledge more than many a noisy politician. *The Housing of the Poor*—Carrots could tell you a thing or two about the room he lives in with his

rheumatic mother and his little brother Billy. *The Drink Question*—a good many wrinkles he could give you concerning that, no doubt. *The Workhouse*—he is acquainted with its interior. *The Police Court*—he has had occasion to visit it, though, I am glad to say, not on his own behalf. He has had many talks with the Dustman, I don't doubt; and the Policeman; and the Sanitary Inspector; and the School Board Officer—for he has an enquiring mind.

When, in time to come, he is asked to vote for the people's friend, Carrots will want to know the reason why. So, people's friends beware! a rare heckler will be found in Citizen Carrots!

It is dinner time, and there he flies to make another penny or two—for time is money—though the fate of that prodigal Cutting was being decided. He will be back again to school at two sharp, for none know better than he that knowledge is power. Then at four he will scud swiftly to Fleet Street, and invest in evening papers, and go home to bed when he is satisfied with his takings. If the 'noospaper business' is brisk and 'orrible murders' are on the bill, he is a-bed by eight. If news is dull—then it is ten.

But, cold and dark though it be, he is off again long before cockcrow.

I leave it to the future citizens who will

administer the affairs of this vast capital—the greatest in the wide, wide world—to return their thanks to Mr. Acland. It is to that sagacious Minister, I believe, that they owe this lesson in the time-table.

*A LITTLE DINNER IN THE
BOROUGH*

THE clocks in the Borough are striking twelve, midday; the rain is coming down in a drizzle; cold and nipping blows the wintry wind; umbrellas are in mortal throes, and gasp and wheeze and creak; road and footpath are thick with mud, and so slimy that men and horses slip and slide and slither on their greasy way.

Never, in fact, did even the Borough look more sombre, more depressing than on this most disagreeable morning.

But, bless you, the children in this part of the world don't seem to mind the rain nor the cold winds in the least. As the clocks are striking twelve—midday—they are pouring out of every court and every alley. Even impatient wayfarers hurrying hither and thither, stop to look at them; even the drivers on cars and drays, and great lumbering waggons, lift their eyes from reins and whip for a moment. And no wonder! The din they make rises even above the Borough roar.

Down Marshalsea Road they troop, and then suddenly disappear.

‘Whither are they bound?’ asks the stranger.

‘Why—to the Farm House,’ comes the answer, with a stare at you of superior knowledge.

‘The Farm House!’ exclaims the stranger. Then he marvels at the grotesque incongruity, and wonders what sort of a farmhouse can exist in the Borough.

But there it is, sure enough—at the bottom of a grim passage they call Harrow Street. And this Farm House does in truth prove to be the goal which all these children have made for on this particularly unpleasant winter day. Harrow Street is full of them from top to bottom. What order prevails, though! No drill sergeant is to be seen, not even a policeman; but they have ranged themselves in one solid line, three or four wide, and mark time with truly military precision, though you would never know it but for the rapid movements of their feet. Those boots make no noise, or very little—a sort of sullen flip, flap, flop, as of boots down at heel and sodden with wet and mud; or of no boots at all. Good Heavens! did humblest cobbler that has handled awl for years ever see such a collection of coverings for poor feet? Never, I’ll swear. Some boots had soles and very little upper; some had a good deal of upper and

very little sole ; some curled up at the toes like the boots which our ancestors wore in the old, old days ; some curled round the corner ; some were hooked like a mark of interrogation ; some were plainly mother's boots, size sixes or sevens, still bearing signs of a gaudy past ; others were father's boots—you know the sort of thing—regular pot-wallopers—tens—in which the tiny foot is almost lost ; others were mixed—one of mother's, one of father's—and not one pokes the finger of scorn at them, though the infantile mind has a sharp sense of the ridiculous. Then some, again, had wooden bottoms ; some were obviously of brown paper and nothing more ; others were gnarled and wrinkled like a very old woman ; others were twisted and bent into many queer shapes until they really resembled human faces ; some were kept together with string ; others gaped wide—in short, it was as remarkable a collection as could be seen anywhere out of a dust-heap specially devoted to decayed boots and shoes.

But, I am glad to say, there were also a few honourable exceptions, and these call for no notice, being just plain boots, nothing more nor less.

Then the clothes—what a truly marvellous array of garments ! Poor Joseph's coat would have looked commonplace by the side of some of them. Little girls in long dresses, big girls in short

dresses; many girls in very little dress at all; little boys all overcoat, from which buttons were conspicuously absent; big boys in no overcoat at all, very little coat, and no waistcoat whatever; material most miscellaneous; stockings absent in many cases, holey in nearly all; fit no object; legs bare, legs half-covered; shawls (which often enclosed a baby) of many hues, knitted or woven; collars—but few to be seen; head-pieces—a truly marvellous mixture of straw, cloth, wool, velvet, flowers, and finery. When, I wonder, does the child of the Borough get a new rig-out from top to toe? When? when? when?

But the line begins to move. It shouts and cheers—piping trebles mixing with hoarse and eager cries. The voice of the Borough child soon loses any infantine sweetness it may possess. Nay, I'm not sure that I didn't hear strong language from some of the boys—*very* strong language; even some of the mites of girls will rap out an oath which would shock your ears who live over the water. But there—they mean nothing. It is like sailors' language—only sound and a little temper. Why, even the chirrup of the Borough sparrow has a minatory tone about it. But there is no disorder. March, march, march towards the Farm House, which fills the bottom of the street; and scores of little bits of paper, blue, and red, and

yellow, with big letters stamped upon them, flutter in the air, held up on high by scores of little hands. These are inspected by a pair of janitors at the door, the procession dissolves as if by magic and flies up the groaning steps regardless of further ceremony.

Let us follow them.

What a fragrant smell salutes the nostrils! The smell of meat! What deafening sounds fill the air! The sounds of a hundred and fifty spoons clattering against a hundred and fifty plates! The sounds of great sobs, and gasps, and sighs—all expressive of intense satisfaction—and chatter! But you can see nothing at all. The big room on the first floor of the Farm House is full of steamy vapours.

These pleasant mists cleared away in a minute or two, and then a truly wonderful sight met the eye: a hundred and fifty children of the Borough were dining sumptuously!

On each plate lay a most savoury lump of suet pudding and potatoes, steeped in luscious gravy. It was none of your meagre gravies, but a thick (nay, even viscous) fluid. You could see the fibres of the meat in every drop of it. It was gravy for the gods. And the helpings were most prodigal.

It is one of the first of the free dinners of the season that is in progress.

In winter months, when skies are black, when fog chokes, when the foul rain souses the town, when the snow falls, when the ground is iron-hard, when the bergs cover the sullen river, these humble feasts are provided all over London for the child of the Board School. Then it is that fathers are out of work—when work is frozen. Then it is that workhouses and hospitals are full to overflowing. Then it is that misery shivers in fireless garret or cellar deep. Then it is (most surely) that even the flat iron is (metaphorically) eaten; the frying-pan too; and the saucepan; and even the boots of the whole family.

Misery is strangely prolific; every hovel, every court, every alley teems with children. To school they must go, though. But what is a mind without a stomach? Surely no mind at all.

‘Those whose fathers are out of work, hold up your hands,’ cries the Master of Orange Street School, Borough, say, for the sake of illustration.

Many hands are held up.

The Master is pretty well aware whether the hands tell the truth, from personal knowledge often enough. Moreover, the boys and girls act as a check upon one another, and are not shy of giving the real facts concerning their comrades’ circumstances, if, in their eagerness for pudding, they

have not told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Thus, alas! do the pangs of hunger work.

To the needy ones, then, does the Master give one of those much-desired tickets which we saw fluttering in the rain, and a ticket procures admission to one of those Farm House dinners—chief centre in this ever sombre, ever toiling, ever hungry Borough.

The clatter is louder than ever now; they are scraping the plates with the spoons; not a morsel is left; the swift attendants are already preparing for another set of guests; benches rumble; the room slowly empties; the cook at the copper is cutting up more puddings; ladles out more potatoes—more of that luscious gravy; another hundred and fifty plates are placed in orderly rows along the tables; once more is the room full of fragrant steam; once more the room fills again; once more does Pandemonium reign.

This is the fourth batch, and between six and seven hundred dinners are eaten in less than an hour. Could even an alderman who has passed the chair get through a banquet so quickly?

And so it is every day of the week except Saturday. The bill of fare changes day by day. Now it is meat pudding and potatoes; now it is plum pudding (very plain); now it is Irish stew and bread; now pea soup and bread. Bread is

only given twice a week, being the staple diet of most Borough children, even on a Sunday—with a little herring or a ‘haddick.’ Of all dinners, to-day’s is the most popular—meat pudding; whilst pea-soup is less appreciated.

Not only dinners do they get, but ‘breakfastes’—as many call them—when times are very hard—‘breakfastes’ of porridge, with a slice of bread and jam as a snack.

In this lot of guests—the final batch of the day—a number of little mothers have smuggled themselves in, having persuaded the janitor to let them eat up the scraps. They look at the authorities—a little conscience-stricken, perhaps—but eat on, and between the mouthfuls fill the spoon with gravy and pour it into the baby’s mouth. But the babies eat bits of pudding, too, with greedy eyes. Here is, for example, Miss Mary Anne Sidey, with a baby which shares her shawl. Mary Anne is only thirteen, though you would take her for more.

‘Are you going to school, Mary Anne!’

‘No,’ says she, wiping the baby’s mouth.

‘Why not?’

‘‘Cos I’ve got chronic rheumatism of the heart.’

This sounds a very awful disease, but Mary Anne has often been to the hospital, and has probably picked up her big names from the students. However that may be, her lips are bluish; the

school authorities have exempted her from the three R's for ever; and now she stops at home and nurses the baby. *Nota bene*—there always is a baby. By the time a little wool appears on the head of number one, number two appears; and so—*ad*—well, I was nearly going to say—*infinitum*. There is no doubt whatever that babies are the bugbears of the Borough ratepayers. Take this particular Sidey baby—with its poor, withered, wondering face, whose big, brown eyes peer at you through smudges of dirt and gravy, and snicks of suet pudding! It has a terribly grown-up appearance. Though less than a year old, I suppose ('it's a he, not a she,' interjects Mary Anne, in reply to some remark), he regards you with an awful look of resignation, as if he had always known all the ills that mortal flesh is heir to, and is perfectly aware that he is one of the lowest amongst the masses. It is a sort of weird, woeful, hopeless glance, which makes you shudder. And yet he bears signs of a stroke of luck. On his little head he wears a cap of velvet of vivid green. His god-mother gave it to him on some auspicious day. A birthday gift, perhaps! He has four brothers or sisters a little bigger than himself, including Mary Anne; his father is in Bartholomew's; his mother is a fur-puller—but a piece of pudding has just stuck in his throat, and his affectionate nurse, Mary

Anne, proceeds to slap his little back with remarkable vigour. Poor baby!

Then, here is another little mother feeding another little baby, and mother herself has scarce a wisp of hair on her head. 'Fever or workhouse?' she is asked kindly—an allusion to the hair.

'Work'us,' she replies readily—where they had shaved her.

'Workhouse!'

'Father left us, and we got sold up, and 'ad to go to the 'ouse—me and mother, and baby, and those three,' indicating more mites by her side, devouring pudding.

'And were they kind to you there?'

'Yuss.'

'But you've come out?'

'Yuss.'

'How's that?'

'They found father.'

'Where?'

'In prison.'

'How ever did he get there?'

'Oh! 'is old games—drunk and knockin' folk about.'

'Does he knock you about?'

'Yuss; and mother, too; and 'im'—pointing to the baby.

'But you've come out of the workhouse?'

‘Yuss, *he’s* looking for a place.’

Nota bene.—She doesn’t call it home.

‘Then he’s got work?’

‘Yuss.’

‘And you’re all going to live together again?’

‘Yuss.’

‘And where are you living now?’

‘*He’s* in a lodgin’ ’ouse—we’re at grand-mother’s.’

‘And will you be glad when you’ve got a place?’

‘No.’

‘You’d be better off without your father?’

‘Yuss.’

There’s a family history for you to ponder over! What scenes has baby Black (that wasn’t the name, but it will serve) already witnessed during twelve short months!

And we can only give these wicked Blacks a month! What can you do with such ruffians? And what, I ask you—what would the little Blacks do without the ‘Meat Puddens,’ and so on, which are to be had at the Farm House? And what, I ask you—what will happen to them when they get a little older? Pretty citizens they’ll make, you may be sure, Board Schools notwithstanding. For a few years they hover between street, cellar, lodging-house, and ‘work’us:’ the schools take

care of them during the day (in the night the State can do nothing to help them), after they are two or three, till they are thirteen or fourteen; and then——?

Who is this poor, silent, little creature, with the frightened, furtive gaze? She will answer no questions, but creeps away, pudding in hand, to eat it in some dark corner alone.

She saw her mother kill one of her brothers in a drunken frenzy, the *chef* told me in a chilling whisper.

But don't think that all these seven hundred diners have such terrible histories. Many of them, though thin, anæmic, ill-clad, and barefooted, are merry as children should be, at all events during the dinner. Few, I suspect, though, will have more than a bit of bread till pudding-time or pea-soup time comes round again. I cannot say that all of them are high-principled either. But hunger is a very Mephistopheles for guile and wickedness. There is John Laster there, the cunning boy in the corner—he has just been detected in the act of stealing his neighbour's pudding when that foolish young person was stooping down to pick up his spoon.

Then there is the sharp boy who is not to be done out of his fair share of pudding. 'Look here, Miss,' he cries to one of the waitresses (a lady who hands round the plates and washes up in winter,

and hawks jewels in the fair summer time). 'Look here—*this* ain't a 'elp, is it?'—and he pointed to his plate with curled lips and a tear in his eye. It was in truth but a pudgy corner and little more—the knife had slipped, I suppose. However, he got another and a fuller helping. Above all—there is that infant phenomenon, young Gooch.

'Could you do with another dinner, Gooch?'

'Yass.'

'How many dinners could you eat—if you tried very hard?'

'Three,' says Gooch.

'Three! How do you know that?'

'Cos I've eat three.'

Could Euclid himself require further demonstration?

'How many pennies are there in a shilling, Gooch?'

'Twelve.'

'And how many's two and two?'

'Four.'

'Very good indeed, Gooch.'

The explanation of this episode is that Gooch is not quite 'all there,' and he is a good deal humoured. But, unfit though he be, he is not such an idiot as to refuse three dinners if he can get them, which tends to show that his intellect is decidedly brightening.

I had just turned away from Gooch when Mrs. Burgwin entered the banqueting hall, of which, by the way, she has the direction, being the treasurer of the 'Referee' free dinners fund, inaugurated years ago by that truly faithful friend to the poor, Mr. G. R. Sims (few know the number of his good works), supported by all of the actors, actresses, artists, and authors of the day. They may have their little differences, these people of Bohemia, but they are certainly the freest-handed beings in the world—I suppose because they themselves live chiefly on emotion. Mrs. Burgwin's black bag was crammed full of papers (cheques many of them, I believe, and postal orders), and she had just looked in to see how the attendances were. Ah! there was no lack of them. From this shrewd and energetic lady I gathered that the dinners in the schools themselves—for in many cases they are eaten in those sacred precincts—had not yet begun—this being still early December. So for once in a way the children of the Borough are in luck's way. This Farm House fills its six or seven hundred mouths a day during the winter, from the 'Referee' Fund, and such balance as there is is sent to quarters more needy, where cash is short. All the schools work together, and I am told in perfect harmony; the rich schools help the poor schools, and thus none are overlooked, and there is

none of the overlapping which is such an evil in charitable works.

This Farm House is a strange mansion to find in the heart of the Marshalsea—just over the way is the site of the famous prison. The graveyard of St. George's the Martyr is now a public garden, grim enough, to be sure, with its black tombstones and soot-laden balsam poplars. On one of the walls is placed a board on which is printed the legend: 'This stands on the site of the Marshalsea Prison described (or words to this effect) in Charles Dickens's well-known novel, "Little Dorrit."' "

The Farm House was once the town dwelling of the Earls of Winchester. It has an ancient time-worn front, a court, mysterious chambers, old oak panels, upon which you can just make out some of the old Winchester ladies and gentlemen; a curious old staircase; and I dare say a ghost or two if one went into the matter. But for a long time past it has been a common lodging-house. Beds in a haunted chamber may be had at fourpence a night. Many a strange history could those white-washed walls tell if they could speak, I dare say—of the good old days in Henry the Eighth's time, and even of more recent years. Many a man who began life with the hopefulest prospects

has been glad to hide his head in the old Farm House, down Marshalsea way, Borough.

But what is that pleasant aroma which scents the air ?

The *chef* is already at his coppers down below. He is thinking of his porridge for the morning.

*'TO MEET THE
FATHERS AND MOTHERS'*

KEEN blow the winter winds, sweeping in fierce gusts across London Bridge; black is the river; black is the evening sky, and full of snow; weary is the Borough after a bitter day's work—but the fathers and mothers are crowding into the cheerful school-rooms at eight o'clock P.M. In the West they dine at this hour; in the East and thereabouts, it is a popular time for retiring to bed. But in this gloomy gut of a byway in which the school is situated sounds of modest revels awake the sombre silence; of laughter; of a little zest in life—for once in a way Lant Street is bent on enjoying itself. And yet there are no cakes and ale, no tea and coffee, no songs and suppers. No; these toiling, moiling folk, whose faces bear the marks of labour and privation, which contrast pathetically with high-day garments and Sunday gowns and bonnets, have just come to see what the Board School is doing for their offspring. Ah! times have indeed changed since they were young.

But is anyone *ever* young in the Borough? Is not carking care their birthright? In the Borough, in one of Mr. Booth's notorious Black Spots, where they even live ten in a room? Many a strange tale I heard this evening from one and another—from Head Master Mr. Slingo; from parent—male and female; from teachers; from prize pupils. 'Pore, sir,' said Mrs. Pullen, a genial old dame with white hair, whose grandson had been left on her hands by an unfilial daughter and son-in-law (they had fled—none knew whither)—'pore! why the Mint, sir, the Mint, sir, is known for it—you've 'erd on it your ways, ain't you?' Mrs. Pullen held up her hands and laughed, as if she was really proud of the Mint and its Poverty. But she was in high spirits, for this same grandson had made a beautiful soap-box in the Carpentry School, which she crooned over as though it had been some choice piece of cunning mosaic. Many specimens of similar products lay on the desk before us. But Tom Pullen had made it, with his own hands—and Tom's virtues she sang for a full quarter of an hour. 'Oh! he was a good boy—and such a one for readin'. *He takes his 'rithmetic books to bed with 'im.* That were his only fault—for light is very costly.' Wild these Lant-streetians may still be, with restless ways; but Education is slowly taming them. If Tom Pullen had been of the last

generation, would he have thought a soap-box necessary? Would he have cared about soap at all? And now he devours arithmetic at unholy hours!

I was introduced to Mr. Rudd—a stalwart haddock-smoker with an easy flow of language, who had dropped in with his Missus to see Teddy Rudd’s prize exercise in composition. It was upon the horse, written in a beautiful curved back-hand, on a white folio, spotless, innocent of smudges, free from blots. It was as good as a play—much better than most of them—to see Mr. and Mrs. Rudd turning the precious article over and over, upside down, down side up; and, as Teddy Rudd was not present, very loudly they both sang his praises. I know, though, that Mr. Rudd, in his less genial moods, is quite capable of administering severe corporal punishment to Teddy when he departs from the path of duty. That he is a man of an impulsive nature I am also aware. One of the masters had caned his boy once on a time, and down to the school strode Mr. Rudd in a towering temper. His rights as a Briton had been infringed. He had been metaphorically trampled on through his son. The class was suddenly startled by a thundering at the door, and in he walked with fiery face, and, shaking his fist at the teacher’s face, demanded an explanation.

‘Don’t you ever do it again—don’t you ever do it again!’ he cried. It must have been an exciting scene. In the end the Head Master was called in to assuage his wrath, and Mr. Rudd was hustled out with much difficulty. But he cooled down in a day or two, and in his calmer moments accepted the explanation, apologised for his hastiness, and gave Teddy another hiding. Such is Mr. Rudd, the haddock-smoker, who is still conning his son’s remarks upon the horse, which we read together :

TEDDY RUDD’S VIEWS ON THE HORSE

The horse is my favourite animal, because it works so hard and saves people from walking. We should give the horse a nice clean bed of straw to lie on after it has been working all day, and also give it proper food to eat, and clean, pure water to drink. We should also keep it nice and clean, and not whip it and hurt it, and not give it too much of a load to carry, because it would most likely kill the poor horse. If we are kind to the horse then it is kind to us, and will work much harder, but if we whip them then they are lazy, and will not work.

I do not interpolate the remarks which Mr. Rudd offered from time to time upon these beautiful sentiments (with many more). He was evidently sceptical about the whipping passage by the way he scratched his nose and regarded his Missus. When I came to the end he informed me that ‘he ad a moke hisself—a ’oss were beyond *his* means—

but he supposed Teddy were right. Or what’s the good o’ eddication?’ What, indeed?

Then Mr. Rudd and his spouse took a walk round the room to criticise the compositions of the other boys—to compare them laboriously with Teddy’s. There they were—pinned up to walls, pinned up to boards, arranged neatly on tables; exercises in writing; exercises in arithmetic; maps and coloured drawings; boxes for soap, stands for tooth-brushes, trays for cards, boxes, picture-frames, and a hundred other bits of skilful carpentry which Mr. Wilks, the instructor, is patiently exhibiting to dozens of proud fathers and mothers. Loud is the hum of talk, most cheerful the laughter—and the guests come and go, and go and come, just as they do in more fashionable parties in the West—more fashionable, but much less interesting.

But at this moment Mr. Slingo, the Head Master, introduces me to Miss Jones, the Head Mistress, who thereupon hurries me off down below to the Girls’ Department, the way to which lies down many steps, along many passages. Here you have not only many beautiful compositions, more exercises, more coloured work, but GARMENTS of all sorts, which lend a pleasing variety to the trophies of mere pen, ink, and paper. Look at the prize gussets, the prize hemmings, the prize buttonholes,

the prize darnings, the prize stitchings—examples of which are suspended by innumerable tin tacks to the wall. There is flannel work, and cotton work; there are pinafores and petticoats; there are mysteries; there are socks and stockings; mittens and hoods and caps—I am not surprised to hear that nowadays the girl of the Borough's fancy is beginning to turn to millinery and dressmaking, when the time comes for her to go forth into the world. Cigar factories and cigarette factories claim many of them just at present; a few go into service; but as Education gets hold of them—Education which softens the manners, breaks evil habits, reveals a thousand new interests in this wonderful world we have all got to live in—they are slowly but surely becoming aware of the fact that there are many other fields for employment. Even those Southwark girls are not all wild and untameable—surprising though the fact may be. The three R's, the needlework, the drawing, the drill, the cooking class, the laundry, the Discipline have already raised them high above the Southwark girl of twenty years ago. But let them speak for themselves. I take the liberty of transcribing this epistle (for instance) which Lizzie Jones, aged twelve, has addressed to her dear teacher :

‘I am *very* sorry,’ says Lizzie, ‘I came late this

morning. I could not come early because mother was not well. I told mother that as she was not well I would get the breakfast. I got it all ready and dressed baby and washed myself before breakfast. Father lit the fire, and I gave mother her breakfast, and I came to school at ten minutes past nine. The Christmas holidays I went to my aunt's. They gave me such *nice* Christmas pudding. On Tuesday I went to Hammersmith, to another aunt's, who lives in a draper's shop. Of course I received a present from my uncle. Then I went to Deptford; my grandmother took me to a park; I forget what name it was called, but I know it was a very pretty park. We took some crumbs for the birds and for the ducks. I had a *delightful* time of it. My grandmother wanted me to stay another month, *but I told her that the examination was very near, that I would come and stay another time.* We ought to be very thankful that we have the privilege of coming to school free. When my mother was little she had to pay money, and buy all her books and pens. If we are not educated and did not go to school, we would never get on in the world.'

Lizzie Jones now winds up and begs her teacher to believe that she is her most affectionate and dutiful pupil. I am sure she is, and a very kind little girl to boot—she thinks of her mother, you see, when she is ill; she is very industrious, for

she makes the breakfast and dresses the baby ; she shows a very proper regret for her late appearance at school. That she is not without human frailty, and has a weakness for Christmas pudding, she is not ashamed to confess. But then, she did not forget that birds like crumbs, which was very thoughtful of her, I think you will agree. Many boys and girls, even in the wise and good West, having stuffed *themselves*, would have troubled very little about birds. Then fancy her being so anxious to get back to school, in spite of her grandmother's pressing invitation ! And above all, being grateful for favours received—education for nothing a week, with books and pens, and all manner of good things thrown in !

However, I will not dwell any longer upon this admirable epistle (it was one of many containing similar candid confessions). Here is another—not a letter, but a composition on the Southwark cat—all out of Charlotte Pope's own little head. It is entitled :

COMPOSITION ON THE CAT

The cat is very quiet, especially when it has got a mouse to catch. Cats ought to have a nice warm bed every night as well as food to eat. Every morning regularly a cat ought to have a brush down with a smooth and soft brush, because the cat washes its ownself, it is quite amusing to see a cat wash its face, how it goes round and round its ears, and it must be very clean. Cats are very clean in their

ways, but some of them are thieves, but that is their nature, so they cannot help that. We should never ill-treat a dumb animal, because they can feel as much as we do, but they cannot tell us what pain they are in. We should always treat them kindly. A cat ought to have milk to drink and any bits that are left from the table, but about two or three times a week we ought to buy it a half-pennyworth of cat’s-meat which they seem to enjoy, like we enjoy our Sunday dinner. It is very useful for a house, especially when there mice and other things in the house.

Addison himself could have done no better, could he? Sly humour—*vide* the passage: ‘It is so quiet, *especially when it has got a mouse*;’ tenderness to human faults—*vide*: ‘Some of them are thieves, *but that is their nature*;’ a genial irony—*sic*: ‘It enjoys a half-pennyworth of cat’s meat *just as we enjoy our Sunday dinner*;’ admirable sensibility—‘you should never ill-treat a dumb animal, *because it can feel as well as we do*’—but there, you may educe a thousand morals for yourselves.

How much more material is the nature of Maggie Pickstock, who discusses the cow! But many little girls, many little minds. Listen to this:

COMPOSITION ON THE COW

The cow is my favourite animal. I like the cow because it supplies us with milk. When the cow is killed, its hide, or skin, gives work to the tanner, because he tans the hide into leather. It is also very useful to the leather seller

because he can make his living by selling it to the bootmakers and snobs, &c. Its feet make jellie, and is very good for invalids or young children. The legs are very useful for making beef tea for anybody who cannot eat meat, &c. The flesh of the cow is called beef, and sometimes is very tough. We make our dinner from beef sometimes. The liver is also very nice with a piece of fat bacon. The head and tail very nice soup or broth. So the cow is very useful to us, as nearly every part of the animal can be used.

Maggie Pickstock won't throw much away, that is certain. Thrifty little Maggie—what a house-keeper she will make! What a wife for some lucky fellow down in the Borough! But she is careful to add—I had almost overlooked it, as it forms a sort of postscript: 'we should always be kind and never do anything to hurt it, or do any injury that will pain. We should give them good hay to eat if they live in London.' Well may the teacher mark it all 'V.G.'

The rooms are very crowded now, and the 'at home' is in full swing—up above, down below—this Lant-street school is like some human rabbit warren—as it needs be to hold over a thousand children, from the babies upwards. The babies—from three to six—I had almost forgotten them. *They* exhibit, too—drawings! paper plums, richly coloured! paper apples! paper trees! clay turnips! clay pea-pods full of peas! beadwork! needlework! intricate Macrami work! Bravo—you Borough babies!

A MASTER'S STORIES

THE Master's room is small, not very light, and full of various implements of instruction—including a cane. 'Yes, *sometimes*,' murmurs the Master. 'But always with the best intentions. Only the other day I was compelled to administer half a dozen. The boy was very noisy in school, and his teacher could do nothing with him. After it was all over, I said kindly : " Now, you quite understand, Nutt, I didn't *want* to do it, you know." " But you *did* it, sir," sobbed Nutt, looking up at me—reproachfully, though not angrily. In the old days I shouldn't have been surprised if Nutt had whipped out a knife. Not a bit. Borough boys didn't suffer rebuke gladly twenty years ago. What can you expect from Southwark slums? Why, lots of them live ten in a room even in these enlightened days. It is such that breed a peculiar type of the human animal. I mean not exactly the unfit, the imbecile, the idiot, the blind, the deaf, the dumb—but the *genus* loafer.'

Such a one is the hero of the following incident.

One day Mrs. Putley and Mrs. Nye knocked at the door of the Master's room, and followed the knock in due course, though with erratic footsteps. The visit was paid in response to a polite note requesting an explanation of Jimmy Nye's absence from school, which he had not visited for upwards of a month. Mrs. Nye had brought her friend and neighbour, Mrs. Putley, to support her at the ordeal—indeed, they were both unsteady on their feet, having called at several houses for several drops with a view to keeping their spirits up by pouring spirits down. Poor Mrs. Putley—she was always willing to be cheered up, and on this occasion was in particular need of friendship's solace, for the pallor of her face was relieved by a lustrous black eye—you may have noticed that at a certain stage the optic, when damaged, assumes all the colours of the rainbow—blue, red, yellow, and so on. It sounds paradoxical, but it is nevertheless a fact. At all events, the beautiful hues attracted the Master's notice at once. They fascinated him. But Mrs. Putley was by no means angry. On the contrary, she was flattered, rather, and encouraged, for she at once burst forth into a relation of its history. 'Who give it me?' she cried. 'Who give it me? A young man. A young man—a friend of my 'usband's—we was 'avin' a bit of a talk, when we gets to words—him and me—and he

ups with 'is fist and knocks me down flat—*on my own floor, too!* And my own 'usband a lookin' on! Call Putley a man, indeed! Why 'e ain't *arf* a man. Take my part! Im! Why 'e 'id 'isself under the bed! 'E ain't *quarter* of a man! 'E's no man at all! What is 'e? A shover up. You don't know what a shover up is—and you a school-master! Why 'e shoves the fish barrers up the 'ill when the loads is too 'eavy. What does 'e get for shovin' up? A penny a shove.'

In Mr. Putley you have the typical loafer—not the tramp, nor the beggar, but the loafer. He is satisfied to earn a precarious penny now and then; when his missus is being thumped he creeps under the bed; give him the sun, a little tobacco, a scrap of food, and he is perfectly content to dream the happy hours away. It is with the little Putleys that many difficulties arise in Board School circles.

I need scarcely say that the youth of this Metropolis is very inventive. It may be, however, that he is in league with his mother, who requires him for other purposes. It is just possible that he may be acting under coercion. I scarcely know under which category to place little Billy Musselwhite, who constantly failed to appear at school. Here is his own candid explanation, word for word, written in honest roundhand—I have it before me at this moment: 'Pleas me mother sent me

sister up to Mister Slingow with a note saying that hy was hill.' This is the first sentence of the epistle. But *why* was Billy ill? Mrs. Musselwhite offered no explanation of this point. An experienced controversialist, she left it obscure. Now let Billy go on—*he* is much more candid. 'I atto go out seling matches (*sic*), and after a few howers I became hill, and that I atto go home and go to bead. I atto go over common street and up black-fries and up luggot-hill. On fearsday (Thursday) I had forepence to by eight boxes, and then I earnt tow shilings, and on fryday (this is a savoury way of spelling it) I earnt one and sixpence and on sadday I earnt af-a-crown.' Sadday!—nay, most cheerful day, I should think. What profits there are on matches! Let us not probe too deep into profits, however. Rather let us wink, metaphorically speaking, at Billy's business, and pass on to another phase of a pedagogue's anxieties.

Not for weeks had little Rufus been seen at school. He had red hair, as might be supposed from his Christian name, and, though thus conspicuous, had not been seen within the precincts of the Borough. Oddly enough his other name was Rainbow. His father's name was Rufus, too—Rufus Rainbow, by profession said to be a scavenger, but a bit of a mystery, as will be shown in a minute or two. Well, once upon a time, the Master reported the

case of the truant Rufus Junior to the Visitor—Mr. Short, let us call him. Visitor, I should say, is the euphonious name given to those vigilant officers of the Board whose business it is to run truants to earth. Mr. Short accordingly paid a visit to the room in which the Rainbows were supposed to be residing—it was on floor No. 10, of a block of model dwellings. ‘Rat-at-at-at’ went Mr. Short’s knuckles on the door. ‘Rat-at-at-at.’ ‘Who’s there?’ said a deep female voice within, in a sleepy tone. ‘Who’s that knocking so loud at *my* door?’ It sounds just like Little Red Riding Hood, doesn’t it? Was it the Wolf? It *might* have been, considering the length of time which elapsed before the owner of the sleepy voice turned the lock. But it did turn at last, and then the female shuffled away, saying: ‘Lift up the catch and walk in.’ Mr. Short availed himself of the invitation, and found that the person with the sleepy voice was in bed. ‘Good morning, Mrs. Rainbow,’ said Mr. Short politely—these Visitors are all polite: they must be. ‘I’ve called to know why your boy Rufus doesn’t come to school.’ ‘‘Oo do you say? There’s nobody of that name livin’ ’ere. Rainbow—Rainbow—you’ve come to the wrong shop, mister. Ain’t there a Rainbow livin’ in these dwellin’s?—’ow do I know? You’d best inquire for yourself.’ And at this point of the conversation sleep overcame

the owner of the room, and she was snoring loudly. Mr. Short accordingly walked off very quietly, closed the door behind him, and, having made many other inquiries, thought that he must have been misinformed as to the position of the Rainbows' home.

A few days later, however, he met another Visitor, and the case of little Rufus cropped up by chance. 'They *do* live there—yes, in Jackson's Buildings—floor No. 10.' Mr. Short turned yellow with annoyance, to think how he had been deceived by the astute Mrs. Rainbow. 'I'll be even with them,' he cried. 'I'll have them yet.' The next morning the 'copper' (that is the name for a policeman) called at No. 10, armed with a bit of blue paper; the room was pretty crowded, containing little Rufus, two or three brothers and sisters, the sleepy female with the deep voice, and Rainbow. After his wife had whispered something to him, he was observed to smile, as if to convey his indifference to the law, rubbed his eyes well with a pair of very dirty hands, put on his clothes, and accompanied the 'copper' to the Court, as if bound on a pleasure trip instead of having a fine of five shillings in prospect. There were a good many other parents in Court, who one by one marched into the dock, and were duly dealt with by the magistrate; but Rainbow didn't seem to mind the delay in the least. He was in a most jocular mood; chatted

with the gaoler, exchanged friendly confidences with the witnesses, winked at the Visitors, who were there with their record of attendances and other documents. Indeed, you would have thought that Rainbow was a gentleman of means, so little did he regret the passing hour.

‘Mr. Rainbow.’

No answer.

‘Mr. Rainbow.’

Still no answer.

‘Here, you—come along,’ said the ‘copper’ who had brought him, leading the forgetful fellow out of his seat.

Accordingly he entered the dock in a jaunty, devil-may-care way, and, resting his elbows on the rail, looked first at the Visitor, then at the clerk, and at last allowed his gaze to settle on the magistrate.

‘Mr. Rainbow, why don’t you send your boy Rufus to school?’

The Court resounded with peal after peal of cheerful laughter, which much scandalised the officials and made even the case-hardened magistrate a little angry.

He repeated the question in sterner tones.

‘Mr. Rainbow, why don’t you send your boy Rufus to school?’

‘Why don’t I send ’im to school? You want

to know that? I'll tell you—'cos me name ain't Rainbow, and I ain't got no Rufuses. *I'm only Rainbow's lodger!*'

And when the 'copper' arrived at No. 10 later in the day, not a sign of a single Rainbow was to be seen.

They had gone, bag and baggage. And Rufus had disappeared.

What trouble some people take to evade the Education Act! It is not prudent to ask the boys what their fathers' occupations are. Rufus Rainbow's father was popularly believed to be a scavenger, but nobody could say for certain, and the Police Court proceedings revealed nothing except that he had a wife, a family, and also took in a lodger. Some boys will tell you readily enough, but nevertheless it is not always wise to inquire. One day a Visitor, in the common acceptation of the word, put his hand on a sharp little fellow's head and put the question, with the best intentions: 'And what does *your* father do for a living?'

The boy thought, his face twitched a little, and then he looked up and replied very shortly: 'I don't know. *I never arsked 'im.*'

The girls of Lant Street School, to which these stories refer, make cardboard boxes beautifully. Each is supplied with a piece of board, upon which

they rule exact octagons, hexagons, squares, or whatever figure the shape of the box may require. The results are admirably accurate. With practice the eye is trained, the hand is trained, and accuracy in measurements soon becomes second nature. Many of them take up the binding business when they have to make a living for themselves, which is very early in life. Not long ago a grown-up woman came into the school, and, picking up one of the boxes, said to the Mistress: 'I'll tell you what it is—your girls is so quick at folding they're cutting us out altogether.'

But as Mr. Slingo and I were gossiping in this cursory fashion, a modest tap sounded on the door, and a clean little boy, in a clean suit crowned with a clean paper collar, stepped in and said with a shyness which I had little associated with Southwark:

'Please, Mister Slingo, Ponton's come.'

I could see by Mr. Slingo's genial face that he was pleased.

'Very well, George'—he knows all their Christian names, and they certainly have a more easy, a more sociable ring about them than the formal surname—'Very well; I'll be there in a minute.' Then, when George had gone, he turned to me: 'Come along, and you will be interested.' No further explanation was vouched, but when I got

upstairs I *was* interested. There was a sunburnt, wind-tanned bluejacket, in full togs, the navy-blue breeches with the familiar bell bottoms, the navy-blue blouse with the white cording, the free-and-easy open collar. This was Ponton, a strapping young fellow, who smiled all over his face as we entered, and strode forward to shake hands with his old master. Yes, he had picked up the rudiments at Lant Street a good many years ago. To-day he had dropped in—why, do you think? To give a free-and-easy lecture on geography to the new boys. How they stared at him, how they envied him, how they giggled and nudged one another!—the infant mind in the Borough is peculiarly susceptible, and is readily stirred to jokes and laughter. It is easy to be merry if you are fat, but to be merry on an empty stomach is surely a most healthy sign.

Ponton had brought his album with him to begin with, and a very handsome picture book it was, its covers carefully protected by brown paper, on its pages not a smudge to be seen, and the photographs of strange places most deftly pasted down. From his album you can construct your Ponton in your own mind—a bluejacket of careful habits, very neat in his personal appearance, hair carefully trimmed, face smooth. I should say that Ponton is of a thrifty disposition, although he comes from

the Borough ; that he is more or less of a teetotaler, obedient to his officers, kind to his friends, and thoughtful of his mother, whom duty compels him to leave behind ; grateful to his old schoolmaster, for he is foregoing some of his hard-earned leave to give this lecture on his travels.

I never heard a better lecture, though he protested that he was nervous.

A map of the Mediterranean was rapidly sketched upon the board, and, ferule in hand, he described the curiosities of Gibraltar, of Malta, of Alexandria, and various other ports in the famous inland sea. It was wonderful to see how soon he caught the ear of the Borough boys—there must have been sixty of them. Resting their chins upon their upraised hands, they followed his stories and listened with distended eyes. True, Ponton had had no hairbreadth 'scapes, nor many perils by sea and land, but there he stood—he an old Lant Street boy, the embodiment of that which the Borough boy, with his bold and restless disposition, loves so well—adventure. He told them what a day's work was aboard the 'Ramillies,'—what time they rose, what time they breakfasted, what time they dined, what time they turned in. He explained the mysteries of ship's bells and dog-watches, he described donkey races in Egypt, he told a good story of Lord Cromer and a camel, he told how the

Spaniards smuggled tobacco by tying it round their dogs at 'Gib.' Well, his lecture lasted over an hour, and a more interesting, a more practical lesson in geography I cannot imagine. It was geography at first hand, and the boys gloated over it.

When he had done, the album was exposed to view, and then the boys rattled off very correct answers to innumerable questions upon the lecture which Mr. Slingo addressed to them.

I must not forget to mention one passage.

'I have great trouble,' said Mr. Slingo, 'to keep the school tidy. You boys *will* scatter paper and rubbish about the rooms, and the steps, and the playground. Ponton, on board ship are you allowed to do that?'

'No,' laughed Ponton.

'May you spit upon the deck whenever you feel inclined?'

Ponton grinned.

'What happens, Ponton, if a man so far forgets himself as to soil her Majesty's decks in such a manner?'

'If a man is caught spittin' on the deck,' said Ponton, 'he has to wear a certain sort of belt, and he is not allowed to take it off, he is not allowed to go below, he is not allowed to rest until he catches some other man spittin' upon the deck. When he

does, he puts the belt on the other man—and then it is *his* turn.' I think this is what Ponton said, but the boys laughed so heartily that I may not have caught the exact words. At all events, there is the substance of them.

When Ponton left us we asked the class to say how many of them would like to be sailors in Her Majesty's Navy. Every boy, except a few very sleepy ones who had probably been hard at work in the early hours of the morning, held up his hand. However, the Borough boy's fancy is very fickle. I dare say if Mr. Slingo happens to secure Tommy Atkins on furlough, late from India, an ex-Lant-streetian, hands will go up for Her Majesty's Army.

LISPING LAUREATES

IN the course of my explorations there fell into my hands the efforts of some Board School poets which I am about to rescue from undeserved oblivion. Many worse rhymesters attain the glories of print, I do believe. No splendid binding of morocco encloses these offerings to the Muses—they are contained in two humble penny exercise books, besmudged with many a greasy thumb. A fond master had preserved the dusty folios in his desk. It was a mere chance that led to their discovery ; they were buried beneath deep mounds of pens, and pencils, and well-worn volumes on reading, spelling, and arithmetic. I will tell you how it came about.

On the walls of the schoolroom hung various cardboard sheets upon which were writ, in large round hand, many good rules, precepts, and so on, amongst portraits of Grace, Nelson, Gordon, Wolseley, and other famous folk. For instance :

RULES FOR READING

Speak out plainly.
Read slowly.
Mind the stops.
Say '*having*,' not '*avin*'.

A FEW MEASUREMENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| St. Paul's Cathedral is . . . | 404 ft. high |
| Our class-room is . . . | 18 ft. high |
| The door is . . . | 6 ft. high |
| The large blackboard is . . . | 4 ft. high |
| Tom Pratt is only . . . | 3 ft. 9 in. high |
| A slate is . . . | 11 in. high |
| A halfpenny is . . . | 1 in. in diameter |

Mind you, these are very small boys of eight and ten; many of them know little about H's and th's; they often say 'muvver' and 'faver.' They are none the worse for that. I fancy, though, that the simple version of the Ten Commandments may not be unnecessary. These fine moral precepts ever stare them in the face. How do they go?

Worship God.
 Worship Him only.
 Do not swear.
 Give a time for rest and worship.
 Love and obey your parents.
 Love your enemies.
 Be pure in heart.
 Be honest.
 Be truthful.
 Do not covet.

I am tolerably certain that Commandment Number Six—*Love your enemies*—has been broken recently. *Ecce signum!* Nay—not *um*—but *a*, the termination should be, if I count certain marks aright. But after all the Borough boy is not alone

in such rude violations of our social code. And now we come to the very friendly scrap of paper which led to the unearthing of the Lispings Laureates—it was pinned to the wall and labelled ‘List of the unwashed.’

Wild horses would not drag further revelations from these discreet lips. Ah! Nansen was not alone in these most undesirable saponaceous difficulties. After all, bread is better than soap any day. I throw down the gage, and challenge any sane man to combat that assertion. As a matter of fact, clean boys were in the majority on this particular morning, and the list was very short.

‘Why,’ said the Master, tapping the said list with his forefinger, ‘I have had poets amongst such as these’—some of them were *so* wild, *so* ragged. Then he raised the lid of his desk, and with some difficulty placed Volume Number One in my willing hand. From out the pages fluttered the following trifle—’twas on a single sheet of note-paper, writ in big bold letters, and unusually legible for a poet’s fist. It asked so plainly to be noticed—in Proso-popœia’s name let it then have first place. It is called

THE DISOBEDIENT BOY

I once knew a little boy,
His name was Johnny Ray,
And when his mother wanted him,
He was always out at play.

We cannot wonder that such a profligate came to a bad end. Listen to the melancholy *dénouement* :

I once knew a little boy,
They called him tiresome John,
And one day whilst a-playing about
He fell into a pon'.
And his father and mother
Did search for him
All day and all night long,
And on the morrow,
To their great sorrow,
His lifeless body was found.

Poor little Johnny ! Let us drop a tear over him and pass on to another piece, by another poet with gruesome tendencies, entitled :

A MIDNIGHT MURDER

The midnight policeman takes his rounds,
The cat from road to area bounds.
Late supper parties lay about
With all the drinks of ale and stout.

Surely that is a sufficiently graphic picture of life in Southwark, and prepares us with much skill for the dark deed that is about to be done.

Look ! see that flash of bright light there.
Hark ! hear that crack of a rifle near.
Is murder done ? Ah, look ! stained with blood
We see a body, all covered with mud.

Here the poem comes to a sudden termination, and the singer's fancy turns abruptly to

COUNTRY SCENES

The leaves [he writes] that rustle in the wind,
Do help to lead a man that's blind.
The fields are green ; the cattle are lowing,
And the early farmer his seed are sowing.

I fear that a reviewer *might* say something nasty about that second line, but even Laureates trip sometimes. And now let us try another strain—the pathetic. The author was a promising little man of ten or so when he died of consumption. He was quite resigned to his fate, and about an hour or two before he breathed his last he willed his property away, whispering his last wishes in his mother's ears. A top, I dare say, a whip, a hoop, a book, a knife—and this thin paper volume in which he wrote his simple verses. Almost his last words were : ‘ Mother, I want Mr. Habbijam to have this ’—and with an effort he took the manuscript from under his pillow. His mother fulfilled his wishes faithfully. It is to Mr. Habbijam that I am indebted for this touching side-light upon child-life in the Borough. As the poet had spent much of his time in the hospitals, it is natural that they should have inspired his poetical efforts.

POETRY ABOUT BROMPTON HOSPITAL

To Brompton Hospital I was sent,
And to be cured was my intent ;
A band of noble fellows are there,
To do you good when in despair.

At first when you are bidden in,
Your thoughts, your hopes, do begin ;
And after you have been in a while,
The sister comes with a pleasant smile.

She asks you where you came from and what's your name,
And asks you whether you generally feel the same ;
And she tells you what you have to wear—
Slippers on the floors and stairs.

In the morning the nurse comes in,
And then to dress we do begin ;
And every man who is able,
Sweeps the ward and lays the table.

At half-past ten the doctor comes in,
And then to gather we do begin,
And when he's gone we feel so pleased,
Because we feel a little eased.

The doctor seems a pleasant man,
Because he cheers you when he can,
And if you're well he feels so glad,
To know you're eased and not so bad.

Some when they leave don't feel gay,
But feel just the other way,
But I was glad when I did go,
Because it seemed to cheer me so.

The day when I was to leave,
I felt happy and did not grieve,
And after wishing all good-bye,
I stepped into a cab ready to ride.

I went to the country to enjoy fresh air,
And it seemed to me very pleasant there ;
And when I found I was to part,
In the manner of speaking it broke my heart.

In turning over the book, however, I notice that this tiny poet had many moods. If he was tearful on occasions, on others, when the doctor had done him a lot of good, I dare say, he was quite bobbish in the manner of speaking, as the following testifies. It is :

THE BALLAD OF BOLD JIMMY SMITH

There is a man of noble fame,
And Jimmy Smith it is his name,
And who one day fought for a prize,
And injured his antagonist about the eyes.

Now this antagonist was Jake Kilrain;
And he had often fought a battle the same,
And when he had finished he was glad
Because the fighting made him feel bad.
(I trust that this is not libellous.)

Now Jimmy Smith's old England's pride,
To win the fight he did strive,
And after fighting many a round,
In a bad condition he was found.

And what they fought for was a money prize,
And when they didn't win it seemed a surprise,
And the spectators who was standing near,
At every blow struck made them fear.

And when it was over it was dark,
And Jimmy Smith said for a lark,
'I was just beginning to rally up,
And let him have a good upper cut.'

Here endeth the ballad. I suppose the police felt bound to interfere with that 'upper-cut' in prospect.

He took much pains in polishing up his lines too. You see it in many an occasional bit. Take this verse, for instance :

When in the morning I woke up
Of tea I thought I'd like a cup,
And after taking a good deep sip,
It was so very nasty it gave me the pip.

Then he scratches out the last four words, and changes them to 'made me feel sick.' There are a good many such scratches in the manuscript before this satisfied him :

Christmas time is supposed to be gay,
But with me it has been the other way,
And the reason why you don't know,
But just a line and I'll tell you so——

Alas ! there is no need for him to tell us. He rests in peace somewhere in the sombre Borough.

Another Laureate. He had a shock head of red hair, wild eyes, with a cast in them, holey were his garments, his boots quacked like a duck on a wet day, and were always thick with greasy Southwark slush. His age was eleven. Who would have suspected that the flames of genius burnt within that little bosom, all bare to the four winds ? But here is the poet's rhapsody on

MORNING

How fair the morning seems,
And the sun throws out his beams,

The lark has begun his sweet and happy song,
And has been singing loud and long.
Everything seems so gay and grand
In our great and pleasant land.
And as people to their work do go
The wind blows softly to and fro.
The rain and wet have long been gone,
And vans along the streets do throng.
People have been long away ;
And the Queen dresses in her best array.
Ducks are swimming in the ponds,
And the people gather peat from the bogs.
Birds sing out their sweetest strains
Among the hills and on the plains.
The leaves of trees do seem to talk
Among the grassy hills of chalk.
The sheep so merrily do play
On this great and happy day.
The river winding in and out
Upon its long and awkward route,
The policeman walking to and fro
Upon his beat, so long and slow.
A boy so merrily at his play
Singing a sweet and merry lay.
The judge judges on the judgment day,
While the prisoners look as white as clay.
And now this lovely day is done,
People have got their great work done,
And to bed they gladly go
To lie and sleep so soft and low.
Thou glorious God so good has been
To make us happy *and likewise clean.*

He must have been a cheerful fellow. You notice the emphasis he lays upon the last three

words. I wonder if it was merely a happy thought to get a decent rhyme.

Some of these poets seem to love the scents and sounds of the country, as dearly as though they were so many little Rousseaus.

But not all. A few seek inspiration in the roaring streets, and one, I notice, goes to the whirling train for inspiration :

With rush and roar from York to-night—
The train tears through the vales,
And with its white headlight so bright
Throws gleams upon the rails.

It is scarcely needful to say that the train is wrecked in the end. It was

full of merry men,
Stout Yorkshiremen were they,
And joyously the songs went round
On this their beanfeast day.

And then all of a sudden

White as death goes the driver,
And white is the stoker's cheek,

as they hear the shriek of another engine.

Then suddenly an awful crash
Rent the air in twain,
And a roar as a boiler burst,
Then shrieks and groans of pain.

There is the true Browning ring about this—without any obscurity. Oh! the humours of these little

Laureates of the Borough! I have just noted a few of them, and Mr. Habbijam restores his precious scripts to their dark resting-place. He must cherish them—he handles them so carefully. But then he is a singer himself—at St. Margaret's, Westminster—*basso*—as well as a schoolmaster.

I trust that I have not trenched on Mr. Grant Allen's preserves in thus presenting the above. He, I know, is the Poets' Columbus.

AN ETON FOR NOTHING A WEEK

I now leave the depths of the dismal Borough and wild Walworth, and beg you to accompany me to the heights of Happy Hampstead. And many good reasons they have for calling that breezy suburb happy. Here no question of boots ever arises ; no question of little dinners for nothing. In this famous district fathers have plenty of work ; mothers stay at home, mind the baby themselves, and direct the household economies. In this wonderful region—(can such things be ? is it fairy-land ?)—they wouldn't know the meaning of that awful word *TRUANT*. Why, the boys and girls would absolutely decline to stop away from school—yea, even if their parents bade them. Here they do not say, 'There is no place like home,' but, 'There is no place like school.' Happy, happy Hampstead !

After spending a day with Mr. Adams, the head-master of the Fleet Road Schools, I do not wonder at this strange enthusiasm. Here we have a very Eton for nothing a week—the very aristo-

crazy of masters and pupils. I make no apology to Eton for using her famous name in this connection. No, rather should I beg Fleet Road to forgive me, for I would back a picked dozen of its ex-7th standard boys and girls against as many Etonians—'weight for age,' of course, to borrow a metaphor from the Turf. A very pretty sight it would be, I am sure. Come, Dr. Warre, will you consent to a combat of wits?

For my own part I absolutely decline to avail myself of Mr. Adams's kind proposal that I should put a few questions. 'No, no, thank you; I will leave them in your hands,' I said.

It was just as well that I was so modest, and so prudent.

During the morning I went with my guide and mentor into most of the class-rooms of this upper school, which deals with over nine hundred boys and girls from the 4th to the 7th, and those who are 'exempt' by law from further attendance. My brain was in a whirl long before noon came. We go, for instance, into the room of one of the senior divisions. A cheerful fire is blazing; pictures line the walls, drawings—plain and coloured, exercises; they are all very busy; the teacher is expounding English history.

'Good morning, boys and girls,' says Mr. Adams. They rise, and say, 'Good morning, sir.'

They are all well shod ; they are all well clothed ; they are all scrupulously clean and tidy ; some of the boys wear Eton collars and very good suits ; the girls are patterns of neatness ; whilst many a frill or scrap of lace, velvet and ribbons, show a proper pride in the external proprieties.

‘ Boys and girls together ! ’ I exclaimed.

‘ Oh ! yes, this is a mixed school. I believe in them,’ says Mr. Adams. ‘ Why !—well, a school, I think, should be like a well-ordered family. Girls are kept up to the standard of the boys ; they gain in courage and candour ; and their presence has a great influence on the behaviour of the male competitors.’

‘ In what way ? ’

‘ Oh ! A boy cannot bear to be disgraced, laughed at, or punished before them, I can promise you. I am very down on bad manners. They’ll lift their caps if they know you ; I never have any complaints about the manners of the boys and girls of Fleet-road.’

Then I listened to the soft voices of the girls, and glanced once more at their well-cared-for frocks and pinafores, their neatly-dressed hair, at the clothes of the boys. What a contrast did they present to those wild Walworthians, those poor little children of the Borough ! Well may they call it Happy Hampstead !

‘Oh!’ said Mr. Adams, when I mentioned this remarkable difference, ‘don’t think that we have no poor in our district. Of course the class of parents is much better—but we touch Kentish Town as well as Hampstead. I admit, though, that we are very fortunate in being the centre of such a famous suburb. What are the parents? Well—pianoforte makers, I suppose, are in the majority—that is the great industry in these parts. They are in receipt of high wages, they are highly-skilled artisans, and their children I find the most clever and intelligent. Then there are clerks, small shop-keepers, and many of the skilled servants of the Midland Railway.’

‘That means they are all in receipt of steady and comparatively high wages?’

‘Yes. We tried the free dinners here, but stopped them because nobody ate them. We give no boots nor clothes here—to our own children. On the contrary, they and their parents actually make collections of such articles and send them down to a very poor school in the East End. There are nearly a dozen sacks full in the hall at this moment.’

‘Then the parents readily appreciate the school?’

‘I should say so. Scarcely a day passes that I do not get a letter from one of them, thanking me

for the ease with which a child has found employment after leaving here.'

'What happens to most of them?'

'Oh! they follow their own bent. Many enter their fathers' businesses, especially the pianoforte work. There is no lack of openings for good boys—every day I receive applications from employers for such. "One who writes shorthand and understands French for choice"—that is a clause which often occurs in such epistles. Those are the boys who will drive out the clever Germans.'

'Then there's no fear of over-educating?'

'Over-educating! Absurd! Why, how many boys out of a thousand get to the very top—the "exempt" sevenths?' Mr. Adams shook his head. 'No; very few in proportion to the multitude we deal with in a dozen years, say.'

'But all those scholarships you have won! All those honour boards which I saw in the hall!' I had been counting them up, and found that since the year 1882 Fleet Road Board School has carried off no less a sum than 10,115*l.* in such honours.

'What is the sum for the current year, Mr. Adams?'

'Thirteen hundred and twelve pounds,' said the master in a moment, with justifiable jubilation.

'But the scholars are not so many in number as

you might think. What becomes of them? Many take up teaching as a profession, in some branch or other. A boy who was a born mathematician would probably go into a business where brains, sharpness, and exactness are badly wanted—a bank, say. The average bank clerk is not a genius. But there are countless businesses where he would be welcome. I take a keen personal interest in putting my children out into the world, just as I and my staff here are anxious to equip them well for the battle of life. But, pray don't imagine that the world will ever be short of hewers of wood and drawers of water! Never. Nor of sluggards, nor the indifferent. The parents often consult me about their boys—no child enters the school until I have had a personal interview with one of the parents. If I think it advantageous to the child, I say, "I should leave him (or her) a little longer." I give my reasons. If, however, I know that the child cares not for knowledge, then I say, "Well, take him (or her) away. It is time." So away he (or she) goes to the shop, or to whatever employment offers.'

'Then the girls, Mr. Adams, what happens to them?'

'Well; some become teachers, others clerks in the City; some—milliners and dressmakers; many prefer the big establishments. I may tell you that

I attach great importance to music here ; many of the choirs in the neighbourhood are recruited from our children ; one girl, with an exceptionally good voice, has just adopted music as a profession. I have others who may go on to the stage.' At this point of our conversation the master turned abruptly round to the class (we had been talking in a quiet corner by the fire), and asked there and then for a recitation.

Many hands were held out, from which one was selected—that of a girl of thirteen, with a most intellectual headpiece. She threw out her chest, tossed back her head, and began—in tones that thrilled me by their depth and fire—Henry V.'s fine reply to Westmoreland on the field of Agincourt. Says the Earl :

O ! that we now had here
But one ten thousand of those men in England
That do no work to-day.

Then Henry :

What's he that wishes so ?
My cousin Westmoreland ? No, my fair cousin ;
If we are marked to die, we are enow
To do our country loss. And if to live,
The fewer men the greater share of honour.
God's will ! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost ;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear ;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires :

But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.

Bravo ! young Siddons—it was a splendid bit of elocution, which masters, pupils, all applauded ; nor was I surprised to hear that little Miss Siddons may some day tread classic boards.

Then the master bombarded them all with questions on Henry, the Salic Law, and treaties. I was quite astonished to hear the quick *réplices*, though the class included County Council scholars.

‘ A Bishop who was banished, quick.’

‘ Atterbury.’

A celebrated blind poet ? ’

‘ Milton.’

‘ A naval Minister who kept a diary ? ’

‘ Pepys.’

‘ Whose reign ? ’

‘ Charles the Second and James the Second.’

‘ The founder of the Indian Empire ? ’

‘ Clive.’

‘ A famous bubble company in the time of George I. ? ’

‘ The South Sea Company.’

‘ The greatest book on fishing ? ’

‘ The Complete Angler.’

‘ Who by ? ’

Isaak Walton.’

‘The Scotch lady who secured the safety of the Young Pretender?’

‘Flora Macdonald.’

‘A Queen whose memory will be always remembered by sailors?’

Here there was a pause. And a number of shots.

‘You’re guessing.’

‘Can no one tell me? Ah! then I’ve floored you all this week. Mary the Second, wife of William III., who founded Greenwich Hospital,’ and Mr. Adams burst into a fit of Homeric laughter. Every week it is his custom to pop into various rooms and shell them with questions upon all manner of subjects. But not every week does he succeed in getting a floorer, clever as he is.

Then we passed into another class-room, where more of the seniors were at work on a lesson in algebra.

‘Some mental arithmetic, please,’ says Mr. Adams to the master.

‘Three times six, add two, add fifteen, divide by seven, add nineteen, multiply by six, take square root, add thirteen, multiply by six, take away twenty-nine, take square root, add fifteen, add four, divide by six’—please repeat all this abracadabra as quick as ever you can, and then you will be able to form some idea of the express rate at which the words rolled out.

‘Five,’ cried a lightning calculator, almost before the last word was formed.

‘Three-quarters of a mile at $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ per yard?’

‘Five pounds at $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ per ounce?’

‘Three hundred articles at $2\frac{3}{4}d.$ each?’

The answers came correctly, and with extraordinary swiftness. Here are clerks to beat the Germans out of the field surely.

Then to another room. ‘That is our exchange library,’ said Mr. Adams, pointing to a bookcase in the corner. ‘All of us deposit—teachers and pupils—all of us draw out, so that we are a mutual benefit society.’

‘Boys and girls—who is the Poet Laureate?’

‘Alfred Austin.’

‘What did he write?’

Silence prevailed. Was this one of the master’s floorers? No. Came a small voice—

‘Jameson’s Ride.’

Who *was* the Poet Laureate?’

‘TENNYSON.’

‘What did *he* write?’

“‘Idylls of the King’—‘In Memoriam’—
‘The Princess’—‘Enoch Arden’—”

‘Who reads Charles Dickens?’

Great show of hands.

‘Which book of his do you like best?’

Great show of hands and loud cries of—
‘OLIVER TWIST.’

‘And what part of Oliver Twist do you like best?’

‘When he is in the workhouse’ (note—the boys and girls in this part of the world don’t call it ‘workus,’ and their aspirates are remarkably well-placed), say some. ‘When he’s with the old Jew,’ say others.

‘Who was *he*?’

‘Fagin.’

‘Why do you like Oliver when he was in the workhouse?’

‘Because he ASKED FOR MORE.’

There was universal laughter at this.

‘The best answer I’ve had to-day,’ cries Mr. Adams, hugely delighted.

‘What novel would you go to for an account of the Battle of Hastings?’

‘“Harold.”’

‘Who wrote it?’

‘Lord Lytton.’

‘And for the Wars of the Roses?’

‘“The Last of the Barons,” by Lord Lytton.’

Such are a few of the humours of the morning; but at this moment a neat little girl in a nice white frock came up, dropped a pretty curtsy to the master, and informed him that his chop was ready.

In a minute or two we were seated before a chop apiece, grilled to a turn, and a dishful of beautiful mealy potatoes, steaming in their jackets.

‘Cooked by the children,’ says Mr. Adams, regarding the viands with a critical eye. ‘We turn out excellent cooks, I assure you. And now they teach their mothers—they often write to tell me so.’

Who would not be a child in Happy Hampstead?

‘But it was not always thus, Mr. Adams?’

‘No, indeed; but I have been a very lucky man.’

‘In what way?’

Well, what managers I have!—so broad, so elastic, so human. Mr. Barnes, the chairman, takes as keen an interest in the school as I do, I honestly believe.’

‘And the clergy—Hampstead is a fashionable quarter?’

Mr. Herklots, the Rector of St. Saviour’s, is one of our best friends. Religion!—he has publicly said that he wishes for nothing better than the instruction. We are all proud of our school, sir. All of us—managers, masters, pupils.’

‘An almost ideal state of things.’

‘Then Mr. Lylph Stanley is another of my very good friends.’

Lunch is over—let us, appropriately enough, just listen for a minute or two to a lesson on Domestic Economy. Surely the sternest lady in the land, the most unbending foe to Board schools and their ways, can raise no objection to such a course. A profound acquaintance with algebra and the mysterious ways of *x*'s *may* tend to make a brain-proud hussy. We need no symbols to enable us to dispense the ingredients of a plum pudding. It *might* possibly be painful for a mistress to come down into her kitchen and find her young and highly intelligent cook absorbed in the entrancing pages of 'Euclid,' instead of seeing to the roasting of the meat. I grant that, though in passing I may perhaps be allowed to remark that even 'Euclid' is preferable to the policeman, or algebra to the surreptitious Tommy Atkins. I doubt, however, whether even the finest education will ever overcome the fascination which those two public characters have for the female sex; but I firmly believe that many a girl from Fleet Road would prefer a lively chapter of Macaulay to the alluring and highly-spiced pages of the good old 'Family Herald.' Alas! there is no doubt about it whatever—the masses still dearly love to read about the classes, and the lovely Lady Ermyntrode, the magnificent Earl of Hardup, with their boudoirs and their castles, are not yet doomed. However,

to Domestic Economy—which means a knowledge of pots and pans, of ranges, of food, of soaps, sodas, blues, and so on. Surely no one, I say, will grudge the girls this lesson. I will just jot down for you a few questions and answers—'tis but theory, I will show you the practice later.

Take cooking :

Question : Name the methods of cooking meat.

ANSWERS

Roasting.—It is better than baking, because no objectionable smell or taste is found after cooking.

Baking.—If the oven is not well ventilated the meat has a nasty taste. The fat given off from the meat by the heat again enters it if it cannot escape.

Stewing has many advantages, among which are the following : It saves time, labour, fuel, and money. Any old pieces can be used up. All nutrition is obtained from meat, bones, and gristle. It is very satisfying.

Frying makes the meat very indigestible, and some or the nutrition goes up the chimney or in the pan.

Boiling extracts juices of meat if not put into boiling water, and hardens fibres if allowed to boil too hard. *It wants a great deal of care.*

Ah ! does not all cooking require a great deal of care ?

In a few minutes I seemed to have traversed the whole field of domestic economy. I knew

What food to give to a baby three months old.

What food a labouring man could digest.

Why his organs were likely to be healthier than those of his masters.

What food I should give to an adult suffering from fever.

Why food should be cooked at all.

How to clean copper utensils.

How to wash a print dress.

How to wash flannel.

The nature of soap, ammonia, blue, and starch.

Indeed, my poor brain reeled for hours afterwards beneath the burden of useful knowledge which had entered into it up in Hampstead. Unfortunate cerebellum! well mightest thou groan and ache with this unaccustomed, this most bounteous supply!

Domestic Economy, however, is so homely, and appeals so strongly to one's love of comfort (generally highly developed in the human *corpus*), that the lesson cannot be regarded as a lesson at all, but rather as recreation. In fact, we all enjoyed it as much as the pantomime, I do believe, especially the bits about the eating, when we smacked our lips again and again. Hush! or the foes of Board schools will be swooping down upon us! Can't you hear them? 'What, laughing in School time! Our time! The time we pay for! Shocking! Too truly terrible.' (How they roll their r's in their tantrums!)

But to make amends for this slight departure from the narrow path we will listen for one minute

to a room full of boys who are engaged upon Rocks. Surely *they* are hard enough for the grimmest guardians of public moneys! Of course this was a very high class indeed—tip-toppers all of them—scholars, prize-winners to a boy; before long they will be out in the world fighting the battle of life in deadly earnest. Many of them are sharp as new needles; some are destined for City offices, where they will surely push even the plodding German who is so much amongst us *at present* out of their way. Oh yes!—they will depart from Fleet Road with enough French at all events to make them desire to know more. Languages living and not dead, is the cry of employers in these times. Not long ago a solicitor in large mercantile practice told me that he had sent his son to Spain to pick up the language. ‘To Spain!’ I exclaimed. ‘Yes; we have such large dealings in that language—in the Argentine and so on—that a knowledge of Spanish is vital to his success.’ At last, then, even the rich parent is waking up from the long lethargy which has possessed him. Are Latin and Greek doomed? Will our boys depart to France, to Germany, to Italy, to Spain, to China, to Japan—yes, even to Timbuctoo and the sources of the Nile in mid-Africa, to pick up the languages? What a queer world this will be in 1997! Perhaps we shall have ousted the German by that time, and be

busy with the coloured races, black and yellow. Markets, markets, markets!—the race for you will be fierce indeed in another century.

Mr. Miles taps his ferule on the board, puts down his microscope, his chunks of old red sandstone, and swiftly dictates the following passage :

The increased brilliancy of the moon and the stars at this elevation, owing to the perfect transparency of the atmosphere, was very remarkable. Travellers having observed the difficulty of judging heights and distances amidst lofty mountains have generally attributed it to the absence of objects of comparison.

Note the hard words—*brilliancy, transparency, atmosphere, attributed!*

It was a lesson in script shorthand. The words are conveyed to paper in neat symbols at the rate of sixty words per minute. What useful boys these will be—nay are! One of them came up and read out the above passage from the dots and crook-backed curves in his note-book as quickly as though it had been plain print. He, and some of his fellows, are about to enter the Civil Service—the Telegraphs, the Post Offices. Why, they even spelt CINEMATOGAPHE without a word of warning. What up-to-date boys they are, to be sure! I wonder if a young gentleman of the same age from Eton, or Harrow, or Winchester could do as much. No, I suppose not; he is one of the ‘classes,’ who has no need to enter the maddening maze of knowledge.

I was not surprised to hear from Mr. Adams that the boy of the Board school is now ahead of his parents; that the girl of the Board school teaches her mother to cook, to make dresses, and conveys to her the secrets of true Domestic Economy. It is no untruth now to say that a child can teach its grandmother to suck eggs. Even the old, old proverbs are slowly being undermined.

Even the lesson in geography, given with such animation by Mr. David James, is full of actualities. To know the position of Sidon and Tyre is all very well; a knowledge of Red Sea soundings is interesting; the buried cities of the Zuyder Zee are curious—but they are dead—*they are buried*. AFRICA—the Matabele—the Transvaal, Johannesburg, Kruger—Dr. Jim—Mr. Rhodes and his schemes for Customs and railway unions, are what we want to know about. Everybody is talking about them. In the trams, in the railway carriages, in every public place those are matters of general discussion. Do not think that the *whole* of working London is absorbed in sport—horse races—‘events’—WINNERS. No such thing. Some fathers may be, nay, *many* fathers; but have I not told you that the new boy is *in advance of his father*? That is a potent fact which will surely make for good in the years to come.

But, mind you, they have their recreations even

in Board schools. At Fleet Road, under the energetic generalship of Mr. Rayns, they have a football club, a cricket club, their swimming and their running. They do not forget that Muscle maketh Man, as well as Manners, as well as Work.

Then, in summer months, when days are long, a class will be taken to one of our famous buildings, the venerable Abbey, the hoary Tower, and, having already read much of their history, are well equipped for a thorough appreciation of them in the stone. Thus is young imagination fed and fired, and when the children return each writes a little article on his visit, the best one afterwards receiving the honour of PRINT. I call this a most artful combination of business and pleasure; of powder and jam. What says the youthful essayist?

In the courtyard we saw the site of the scaffold on which Anne Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, Lord Guilford Dudley, and others were executed. We visited the White Tower first, going up the renowned staircase, beneath which the remains of the two young princes that were murdered are supposed to have been buried. From thence we went into the Armoury, which is also in the White Tower. This room contains the oldest historical relics to be found in the Tower. There are suits of armour which were worn by the old Norman knights, instruments of torture, the old execution block and axe, and countless other relics. We went to the Bloody Tower, now used as the Jewel House. Here are all the Crown jewels, the staffs of office, as well as many of the medals awarded to soldiers. The Queen's crown is among

the regalia, along with the renowned diamond called the Koh-i-Noor, and the crown of Edward II.

We next proceeded to the Beauchamp Tower, where many of the State prisoners were confined. After winding up an exceedingly dark staircase, we came to a good-sized room, round the walls of which were various inscriptions and devices, evidently cut there by the prisoners. Here Sir Walter Raleigh was imprisoned, also Lady Jane Grey. Some of the inscriptions are still discernible, others are quite unreadable.

We next proceeded to visit St. Peter's Chapel, where most of the people who were executed were buried. A Beefeater took us to the Chapel, and when we had all entered he told us where the various graves were. The Chapel is full of graves; even under the pews some of the prisoners were buried. Sir Walter Raleigh, Lady Jane Grey, Lord Guilford Dudley, and others were buried here. At the end of the Chapel are three plates belonging to the coffins of the last three men that were executed at the Tower, Lords Lovat, Kilmarnock, and another Scotch Lord, who were engaged in the Mar Rebellion, which was in favour of the Young Pretender. Besides these coffin-plates is a plate with all the names of the people buried in the Chapel.

But, like Oliver, the essayist still cries for more. *'You are only allowed to walk straight round the building, and then you are requested politely to walk out, so we could not look at everything.'* Lament Number One.

'We were not allowed to go into any other part of the Tower.' Lament Number Two.

Allow me to commend these two paragraphs to the notice of the Governor of the Tower, who, I am

sure, when he knows the facts, will desire to place no more premiums on useful knowledge.

Would that I had space to describe to you the lesson on 'Health' that I heard; the most attractive and elegantly coloured drawings of various portions of the human frame—done under the eye of Miss Reintjies!

Fain would I tell you of the needlework, the designs of flowers for wall-papers, upon which Miss Howarth's girls were engaged! Nor can I attempt to convey to you the magic-like rapidity with which Mr. Smith's scholars solved problem after problem in mental arithmetic—good Heavens! what partners they will be! Many a budding Barnato, many a high-flying Hooley must there be amongst them.

Alas! my time is up. Mr. Adams is buried in examination papers.

As I was putting on my overcoat, I happened to notice portraits of the two Arnolds hanging in his *sanctum*—the famous father of Rugby and the famous son. 'To Matthew Arnold I owe much,' said Mr. Adams, as he saw me looking at them. 'As pupil, as scholar, as pupil-teacher, as master, he knew me and noticed me, and helped me. Indeed, he gave me my first big lift in London—the Head-Mastership of the old Portland British School—in 1870—then the biggest of its kind in the West End.

‘He was a little difficult though, I suppose, sometimes?’

‘Well, some of us *were* a little in awe of him.’ Mr. Adams smiled, and told me a brace of anecdotes of the great foe to Philistinism.

‘I fear he *was* just a little cynical.

‘One day he had come in to inspect a school, and the teachers crowded round him officiously in a way which he disliked very much. Some men would have told them to move out of the way, but Mr. Matthew Arnold was truly polite. Addressing the class, he said in dry tones, “I will now give you some dictation :

“*I am quite surprised to see so many teachers. How wise they must all be ! and how clever !—to teach little boys and girls to read, write and cipher.*”’

There was an uneasy shifting of feet, a flushing of faces, gnashing of teeth. Then one by one the crowd dispersed.

On another occasion he was examining a class of girls in geography. It was a cold day, and between the questions he poked the fire by which he was standing. Suddenly he turned round, and, holding up the poker, said : ‘Who can tell me where this is manufactured ?’

Perhaps the girls were nervous. At all events, there was a prolonged and painful hush, which the teacher—a very nervous lady—imprudently broke

by saying in faltering tones to the inspector :
'Please, Mr. Arnold, that's not mentioned in Cornwell's Geography.'

'No !' returned Mr. Arnold, in measured accents. 'Um ! Cornwell's an Ass !'

Fancy calling Cornwell an ass !

Our 'Eton for Nothing a Week' I have taken as a type of the best, the very aristocracy of the Board schools. There are others which run it pretty close in the race for supremacy. Would there were more of them ! Would there were more Hampsteads ! But you might as well cry for the moon. Merit is so very much a matter of environment (they all know what that ugly word means up there). Leave the Metropolis by the way of the great *termini*—by the North, the South, the East, or the West—cast your eye over the vast waste of streets, roofs, chimney-pots, workshops, all blended together so artistically by smoke and mists—listen to the dull roar of the human tide—and you will cease to expect many Etons in this monstrous growth we call London.

HOLIDAY TIME

HAVING received a card for the Concert at our 'Eton for Nothing a Week,' I gladly paid another visit to the heights of Happy Hampstead. Arriving very early in the afternoon, I found the whole school joyfully anticipating the coming festival.

The hum of many voices rises from a score of rooms, but it is not the droning task-like hum of every day. Sharp come the answers, swiftly are most complex problems solved; there is a frolicsome gaiety in the very symbols on the ugly black-board. Yes—even the very x 's—mysterious quantities!—have a pudding-like rotundity in their persons, which is most suggestive. Even stern Euclid's angles seem less sharp than usual; the lesson in physiology very appropriately turns on the stomach; and—gracious goodness!—are these five little ones going to play at Drury Lane? No; at Fleet Road. Let me try to describe the last rehearsal for you.

The little play is called 'Only a Chicken;' the little playing girls—ranged in semicircular fashion—are rising nine. The floor is the stage; their

fellows—some three score of them—the audience. Prompter rings up—that is to say, Mrs. Walmsley, the good teacher, claps her hands—and Number One tosses back her curly head, throws out her tiny hands, and proceeds thus, with a roguish smile on her lips :

A wonderful story I will tell—
A chicken crept from a broken shell,
And, standing on its tiny feet,
Was crying for a crumb to eat
On a beautiful summer's morning.

What saith Hamlet on the playactor's art? 'Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.' I could have sworn I saw that chicken creeping out of its broken shell! And little Miss Muffet stood high up on her tiny feet, too (oh! no toes protruding therefrom, for this is Happy Hampstead—her shoes were whole)—and cried loud for a crumb to eat, searching in vain upon the well-swept floor for that toothsome article. Then Miss Muffet composed herself, and Miss Mary Horner, in deep and tragic tones, went on with the story :

But out of a dark hole popped the head
Of an old grey rat, with a cautious tread
And a cruel look, where the grass was thick,
Too quickly pounced on the peeping chick
That, standing on its tiny feet,
Was crying for a crumb to eat
On a beautiful summer's morning.

The whole room shuddered as Miss Horner imitated that cruel rat just about to pounce on that hungry

chick. 'O—o—o—o—o.' Sure discretion had been Miss Horner's tutor, minding well mad Hamlet's warning, 'Tear not passion to tatters, to very rags, to tickle the ears of the groundlings.'

But listen to the development of the stirring drama, continued by Miss Hop o' my Thumb :

Then out of the doorway leaped a cat,
That put her paw on the old grey rat.

Kindly imagine a chorus of 'Oos'—'Oo—oo—oo—oo,' and loud expressions of delight which greeted this swift act of retribution. But ere these cheerful sounds had died away

. . . round the corner fiercely flew
A savage dog of a yellow hue,
And fixed his teeth in the tabby cat.

Dreadful ! wasn't it ? And in a trice five sets of pearly little teeth were worrying five unfortunate pocket-handkerchiefs—they carry such articles in Happy Hampstead pockets. Can't you see them ? Can't you hear the diminutive rumblings ? (To denote savage dog.) But the end was not yet. Hear the next chapter proclaimed by Miss Daisy Dimple :

But a naughty boy with a wicked sling
Of a crotched stick and a rubber string,
Look'd over the fence with mean intent,
And a smooth round pebble swiftly sent,
That struck the dog of a yellow hue.

Then Miss Cinderella Smith told how

. . . there came a man on the double quick,
And beat the boy with a black-thorn stick
For hurting his dog of a yellow hue.

The *dénouement* is nigh at hand now, sixty little
hearts are palpitating, and there is a dreadful and
awe-inspiring hush, for

A tall policeman passing by
Now walked up with a pompous tread.

‘Tramp, tramp’—sounded five pairs of *good stout*
shoes on the floor, high in air rose five pairs of
little legs, right—left—tramp, tramp. The pompous
policeman took the unfortunate man who owned
the dog of a yellow hue off to the station ; he was
duly charged with assault and battery, and was
finally

Given a month in the County Jail.

.

And now comes the MORAL, and who shall say
that MORALS are not for our good, even at Christ-
mas time ? It was delivered by that little philo-
sopher, Miss Francisca Bacon, with a lucidity, a
precision, and an air of worldly wisdom most
admirable :

The greatest evil often springs
From the ill effects of the smallest things,
And all this evil upon many fell
Through a little chick from a broken shell,

Which standing on its tiny feet,
 Was crying for a crumb to eat
 On a beautiful summer's morning.

Let us all remember that profound lesson. But ere the little players were in their seats again, the plaudits still sounding from wall to wall, the master called forth the *dux* of the class—a boy who dashed off with wonderful fire some lines from a Lay of Ancient Rome, without halt, without impediment. 'Now then—manners—to whom do we give the title of "grace"?' cries the master. 'Answer, quick.' 'Dukes—Duchesses, Archbishops.' 'Why,' exclaims the master, whose eagle eye has been roving over the rows of heads—'Why that's the girl who won the Band of Hope prize. Stand up, will you, and let us hear a verse or two.' Thereupon rose a child of twelve, of ascetic features, and in Siddonsian tones proclaimed with fervour the following rhymes:

Drunk in the street!
 A woman arrested to-day in the city!
 'Comely and young,' the paper said—
 'Scarcely twenty,' the item read;
 A woman and wife,

Drunk in the street!
 Yes; crazy with liquor; her brain is on fire!
 Reeling and plunging, stagg'ring along,
 Singing a strain of a childish song—
 At last she stumbles and falls in the mire.

Then the poet drew a realistic picture of the poor

creature in the police cell, and the terrible consequences of her craving; a passionate appeal to reason; a little sermon on the publican—

Would you stand still?

Is it nothing to you that such things be?

You who have sons who will soon be men,

And daughters to live to a future—what then?

Is it nothing to you—be they bond or free?

Work! night and day!

Nail up the doors where liquor is sold!

Rescue your land from its load of death;

Add no more to the ghastly wreath

Of widows and orphans, whose knell is toll'd!

Who is this? Another Dinah Morris? A latter-day Joan of Arc, ready to buckle on the armour and stamp out evil? I watched her little face working with a sort of awe, and wondered if she and hers had suffered, that she was so fiery, so full of wrath. Over the water, in the Borough and in Walworth, they impress upon their pupils the blessings of a temperate life, of sobriety, of virtue, in many a lesson, though I much fear that such little sermons are forgotten when school is left behind. What is precept without example? In those sombre regions many mothers are seldom without black eyes, many fathers drink up the week's wages. The magistrate is the familiar counsellor. But in Happy Hampstead I was surprised to hear such fierce denunciations.

‘Red-hot, Mr. Adams!’ said I.

‘Oh! it’s not a school piece,’ said he. ‘No, no. But I remembered the child’s face, and thought she might interest you. The fact is I was one of three head-masters who had agreed to adjudicate at a Band of Hope prize-giving, and I was not a little embarrassed to find that the best was one of my own scholars—there she is. However, we were all agreed, so the difficulty vanished.’

And he patted little Dinah on the head, and sent her back all of a glow to her seat.

But the martial tramp of many feet without, and sharp, short commands stopped further conversation on the subject. ‘Come and see the drill,’ said the master, and we stepped out into the picture gallery—the hall, I mean; but it is of fine proportions, and brick and mortar are almost hidden by a wonderful collection of prints and photographs. At this moment a hundred girls from eight to thirteen are marching round and round in pairs, all eyes on the mistress (Miss Denison).

‘Halt,’ she cries.

‘Hips FIRM! Tiptoe raising left foot, BEGIN!’

‘Hips FIRM! Head backward—BEND!’

‘Head upward—RAISE!’

Arms upward—STRETCH!’

Arms downward—STRETCH!’

‘Hips FIRM!’

‘Heels—RAISE!’

‘Heels—SINK!’

‘POSITION!’

‘Neck—REST!’

‘POSITION!’

‘Hips FIRM! Trunk forward—BEND!’

‘Trunk upward—RAISE! POSITION!’

‘MARCH!’

Did ever regiment march better? Were evolutions more accurately carried out? Shade of Napoleon, Frederick the Great, the Iron Duke! Do Board schools breed Amazons, then? I surely began to think so as I watched the hundred at their marching, and wheeling, and mazy windings. Certainly in a few years I think the race of wife-beaters will have disappeared from the land. (I only trust we shall not develop a race of husband-beaters.) Flat-footed women will be seen no more. Nor flabby muscles! Nor pigeon-breasts!

And now the day dies, the gas is lit, the great school empties, and preparations begin for our evening’s entertainment.

What a delightful evening we had of it! The great hall was full from side to side, from end to end. There must have been a thousand of us all told—proud parents from Hampstead and Kentish Town, rich residents of northern heights, masters,

pupils, inspectors, distinguished visitors, including that potent person Sir George Kekewich, the Permanent Secretary of the Education Department. Raised high above us all was Mr. Harris's choir of little boys and girls—'non Angli sed Angeli'—cherubs with the sweetest voices. What notes more thrilling, more penetrating, more heavenly than a child's alto! There they were, row above row, rising almost to the ceiling, figged out in their very best—a gay garden full of human flowers. How runs the song?

Bid me discourse,
I will enchant thine ear,
Or like a fairy trip upon the green;
Or like a nymph
With bright and flowing hair,
Dance on the sands,
And yet no footing seen.

We had Mozart, Handel, Schubert, Balfe, Mendelssohn, Sullivan, and ever so many more, admirably rendered. And then Dr. McNaught (one of H.M. Inspectors of Training Colleges) conducted them through some old English melodies. 'Ladies and gentlemen,' said that well-known musical authority, 'I am trying my best to introduce these delightful songs into the Board schools. Our children *will* sing, and surely our good old songs—so sweet, so tender, so gay, so spirited—are better than——;' and then the doctor paused to give his words effect

—‘ “ Her golden hair’s a-hanging down her back.” You know that vulgar ditty which has had such a vogue on the organs. And of all songs,’ I think I am reporting Dr. McNaught more or less correctly, ‘ of all old English songs none can beat the old sea songs. Surely we should never let them die out of our hearts and memories ! ’

Then tap went the wand, and we listened to the gallant Jacks singing of their ‘Arethusa.’

Come all ye jolly sailors bold,
Whose hearts are cast in honour’s mould,
While England’s glory I unfold,
Hurra for the ‘Arethusa ! ’
She is a frigate, tight and brave,
As ever stemm’d the dashing wave,
Her men are staunch to their fav’rite launch,
And when the foe shall meet our fire
Sooner than strike, we’ll all expire
On board the ‘Arethusa ! ’

Every bosom was at once filled with a warm patriotic glow at the sound of these stirring words and the lilting air. True—there are no frigates nowadays, but the old spirit is not crushed out even by the floating fighting mills by whose means Britannia now rules the waves. Well—and so the ballad went on—*allegro con spirito*—with lots of action—the Frenchies appeared—four sail of them—and bore down upon the ‘Arethusa,’ and the brave bluejackets thereon fought till not a stick would

stand. But they drove the foe ashore, and then, in true British fashion, each filled a glass to his favourite lass :

A health to the Captain and officers true,
And all that belong to the jovial crew,
On board the 'Arethusa.'

I am sure you will agree with Dr. McNaught that such a ditty is almost as worthy of attention as the street songs which boys and girls of the great metropolis borrow from organ and music-hall. Surely Shakespeare, Dibdin, Herrick, Ben Jonson, Milton ('Lo! Phœbus sinketh in the west') have written ballads not less inspiring, not less graceful, tender, joyous, pathetic than the author of 'Her golden hair's a-hanging down her back,' or the distinguished writer, say, of another even more popular ballad (or whatever he calls it), known as 'Mary Jane's Top-note.' Listen :

She joined a singing class (*speaking of Mary Jane*), but she never said a word

About her only top-note, such a thing they never heard ;
She let it go one evening, and the organist, poor man,
Went flying through the window, and away like mad he ran.
It twisted all the organ pipes, and the boy who blew the wind
Got jammed into the bellows-hole, and left his boots behind.
Refrain—Sit back ! hold tight ! Mary's going to sing !

She's going to try again to crack her throat !
It stops the birds a-singin', it sets the bells a-ringing,
Sister Mary Jane's top-note.

Of course we must all admit the playful fancy and imaginative powers of the poet, but I cannot

help thinking that 'Bid me discourse,' or even 'The Arethusa,' is nearly as well done.

It is the boys of London who spread these 'Top Notes,' and 'Boom-de-ays,' and 'Golden hairs a-hanging down their backs,' like an infection. Mr. Harris, the choirmaster (he is full of honours and experience, so we may take his word for it), tells me that the average boy prefers MARBLES TO MUSIC. The barbarians! It is the girls of London, with the sweet, soft voices, with golden hair a-hanging down *their* backs—enthusiastic lovers of good music—to whom we must look then for reform in the direction which has been sufficiently indicated. Let us hope on! Will they succeed in softening the manners of their comrades—how goes the odd tag in the Latin grammar? But away with grammars.

The concert is over. Let us forget work, too much of which so surely makes Jack a dull boy, and Jill a most stupid girl. Pack up the primers, hide the 'rithmetics, down with the blackboards, turn the maps to the walls. How goes the old song?

Omne bene
Sine pœna
Tempus est ludendi,
Venit hora
Absque mora
Libros deponendi.

Even in plain, practical Board schools they have breakings-up and holidays.

THE LITTLE COOKS

EVERY mite of a girl down in the East, or for the matter of fact in the South, or up in the West or the North, is a housewife by the time she is six. Perhaps before. Why did she play truant? Because she was 'doin' the cleanin'.' Why was she absent from school for a whole week? Because she was 'nussin' the baby.' Surely you have seen that tender little picture of Miss Dorothy Tennant's—the 'Load of Care'—that heavy, heavy baby, weighing down that tiny, tiny nurse! Often enough when times are hard and funds are very low—'when father is out o' work, and mother's bad in bed'—does the poor little mother set forth with scrubbing-brush in hand, and clean the door-steps of the prosperous for twopence or threepence, according to the size and number of the steps. She probably lights the fire of a morning; it is her delight to go shopping to the remarkable establishment where most of the necessities of life are to be obtained by the farthing's-worth; and with the mysteries of marketing she

is very well acquainted indeed. You should just see her in Bermondsey, the Walworth Road, the Dials, the New Cut, or Whitechapel on a Sunday morning, when those localities are alive with poor people buying their dinners. Road and footpath are blocked with stalls and barrows, and flesh, fish, fowl, and vegetables are all jumbled together in confusion that is apparently inextricable. But little mother knows her way about, and whether it is red meat or white meat, beef, mutton, or rabbit, trust her for getting a bargain, for keeping a sharp eye on weight and measure. A farden is a farden in districts where a penny is a substantial coin of the realm. Ah! happy are those who can buy a dinner even once a week. What an agreeable change does a joint furnish to the palate after six days of the humble haddock, the savoury but unsustaining saveloy, the odorous morsel from the fried fish shop, the cold slabs of bread!

So we see that housewifery is the birthright of these children of the poor. But it is one thing to buy meat, and quite another to cook it. How many grown-up mothers know even the elements of that wonderful art? What woeful waste there is, as well as woeful want! What extravagance! What prejudices! Soups they look askance at, and yet what more fragrant than a bowl of *bouillon*? And how cheap! In a thousand cunning ways the

humblest vegetables could be served up. But no; better meat once a week, and six days of cold and uninviting scraps, than any of your new-fangled notions. Soups! stews! vegetables! salads! Impossible!

Well, let these good women have their way, for they know no better; but their daughters will have only themselves to blame if they do not become really good housewives. Every week after they have arrived at years of discretion—that is, about nine—they get an admirable lesson in cooking and kitchenwork for nothing at all. If they are good little girls they will be worth much more than their salt when they are thirteen or fourteen in many a middle-class household. Mistresses would compete for their services. But even if they despise the modest cap and apron, and prefer the factory with freedom, fringes, and feathers, they will be all the more likely to make home—sweet home. And many a home is broken up by bad house-keeping.

This spacious room is one of the Cookery Centres which are dotted about London. The first object that strikes you as you enter is the cheerful fire in the corner burning clear and bright as good cooks love to see it. That is the open fireplace. In the other corner is the more convenient but less attractive range, fully equipped with stewpans and

other accessories. Against the wall stands the cupboard, above which rises shelf after shelf of plates, cups and saucers, cullenders, graters, dishes, and other utensils. Between you and them runs the long dresser, in the centre of which is a gas stove, such as is now to be found in many poor dwellings. Thus you see that the pupil is at once initiated into the three classes of fireplaces which are now in general use—the open, the close, and the gas. In the far corner is a store cupboard, a working scullery with sink, hot and cold water taps, plate and dish rack ; and there is also a cloak-room where the little cooks keep their aprons (supplied by the school), and wash their hands from time to time. Teachers are most particular about this cleanliness—for in cooking especially is it not indeed next to godliness? Over and over again during the two hours that the lesson lasted did I hear, ‘Jane Joyce, let me look at your hands,’ ‘Mary Johnson, your nails ; go and take the dirt out at once.’

The chief beauty of this lesson, it seemed to me, was that everything was real and practical. A mere book lesson in cookery we have already heard. But here the neck of mutton—a very small one, I don’t mind telling you—baking in the oven was very real. The delicious fragrance of it saluted every nostril. Eggs for a Yorkshire pudding lay neatly

ranged on the snow-white dresser—there was no doubt about *them*. They were no conjuror's *simulacra* of wood or plaster of Paris. The flour in the neat little wooden bins was real. The scales and the weights were real. And above all the fire was real, and gave forth a most acceptable warmth on this raw winter afternoon. There was just one drawback to all this reality—namely, the pale and hungry faces of many of the little cooks. However, it is notorious that cooks are not great eaters. Is it not said that the great Soyer never could touch a dinner which he had himself prepared? Oh, the irony of it! Poor Soyer! Poor fellow! He had then to rely upon inferior artists for his own dinner.

‘Attention, please,’ says the mistress from behind the dresser, adjusting her apron and tucking up her white sleeves. ‘Ellen Bayley,’ pointing to that young person with a spotless rolling pin, ‘for roasting or baking meat what is the first step?’

‘Get the meat, teacher,’ cried a new pupil, who was evidently a wise little woman.

‘Silence, please,’ went on the mistress, bringing down the rolling pin rather sharply, but nevertheless smiling. ‘Ellen Bayley—answer my question, please.’

‘Have a clear fire and a hot oven, teacher,’ answered Ellen, very readily.

‘Yes—like this one here; but to-day we are cooking the joint in——’

‘The gas stove—the penny in the slot machine, teacher.’

‘Yes, this is not a penny in the slot, but at your own home you put the penny in and get the gas, don’t you, Ellen? Jane Joyce, what is the next thing we do?’

‘Spread the lean part with dripping, and dredge it with flour,’ said Jane.

‘Why?’

‘To keep the gravy in,’ continued Jane, smacking her lips.

‘Yes—the flour forms a coating. Well, and now it is ready for roasting or baking, as the case may be—and what then? You again, Jane Joyce.’

‘Give it lots o’ fire, teacher.’

‘Yes—give it great heat—for how long?’

‘Ten minutes.’ At least a score of them answered this question.

‘Now—you—Mary Pinkess—why do you give the meat great heat for ten minutes?’

‘To close the poreses,’ said Mary.

‘P-o-r-e-s, the little openings in the flesh which we cannot see. And then——?’

‘Cook it very slowly.’

‘Why?’

‘ So as it shall be tender,’ went on Mary, quite correctly.

‘ Well—how long should the meat remain in the oven, then ? You again.’

‘ Please, teacher, fifteen minutes to every pound.’

‘ Would that be enough ? Jane Joyce, you’re holding out your hand—what do you say ? ’

‘ It must have fifteen minutes more, teacher.’

‘ So that if it weighs ten pounds—— ? ’

In a minute several of the cooks answered quite accurately, ‘ A hundred and sixty-five minutes.’

‘ Yes—two hours and three-quarters.’

‘ We are cooking mutton to-day. Suppose it was pork or veal now—how long should they remain in the oven ? ’

‘ Twenty minutes to each pound, teacher, and twenty minutes over,’ answered a very apt pupil.

‘ And what must we keep doing whilst the joint is cooking ? ’

‘ Baste it very often.’

I should have mentioned that between these questions the teacher several times inspected that very small neck of mutton, and every now and then it hissed gratefully in return for her attentions with the basting-spoon.

When it was done to a turn it was brought

forth from the oven, placed upon the top of the stove, and the class came forward to inspect it. They had helped to cook it, they had helped to bake it—they knew every process off by heart—and here was the thrilling climax. How did Mr. Squeers deal with *his* pupils? ‘Winder—winder—how do you spell winder?’—that notorious pedagogue used to ask the spelling and philosophy class. ‘W-I-N-D-E-R.’ ‘Well—go out and clean it,’ he would say, with a stern eye to the practical. Surely, thought I, we shall not be far behind Mr. Squeers in the year of our Lord 1897, and I expected the teacher to say: ‘Well, girls, you have all helped to cook it—and now you may E-A-T I-T.’ But no such words escaped her; it was placed—the cynosure of forty longing eyes—upon the hob to keep hot. Alas! like those ravens who morn and even brought food to Elijah, they were,

‘Though ravenous, taught to abstain from what they brought.’

The small neck of mutton was ‘an order.’ I may take this opportunity of stating that the great motto, ‘Waste not, want not,’ is most carefully respected in these kitchens. Each of the little cooks may buy the delicacy which she has helped to prepare, either by the halfpennyworth or the pennyworth. Their orders, however, are not very extensive, except at cake-bakings. But dinners are

cooked for teachers in adjacent schools ; and on this very afternoon I saw an order for a plum cake being put in hand, and a delivery of pickled onions being despatched. The teacher, having running accounts with neighbouring tradesmen, is careful to see that nothing is cooked that will not be used, and the margin of waste is surprisingly small.

But the little cooks, who have been washing their hands and putting on their aprons, now come trooping up to the long dresser to make the batter for the Yorkshire pudding, which is on the list for to-day, with many other toothsome dishes. Here is the list for the curious :—

Lentil soup, sausage rolls, fried sausage.
Boiled fish and sauce, fish cakes.
Irish stew, boiled greens, poached eggs.
Stewed lentils, cornflower cake.
Meat cake, rice snowballs, lemon sauce.
Fried chop, steak, steamed semolina pudding.
Shepherd's pie, baking powder, boiled suet pudding.
Pea soup, seed or currant cake.

However, to the Yorkshire pudding.

Hands are examined, mixing bowls are wiped, and all is ready ; the eggs lie in smaller receptacles, and are waiting to be broken ; the flour is being weighed on the scales ; cooks are divided into working parties of four. To each party are allotted a whole egg, eight ounces of flour, and a pint of

milk—we need say nothing about a pinch or two of salt. And then to work.

It is a busy and exciting scene. The teacher flits from bowl to bowl, and hovers over each one with a sharp eye to the batter, which shows a decided tendency to coagulate. Round and round go the spoons, clatter, clatter, clatter; buzz go twenty little tongues; the batter is a-making. How goes the recipe which has been learnt before my arrival?

Mix the flour and salt in a basin.

It is mixed right well.

Make a hole in the centre.

There it is—true to the code.

Break the egg into another basin. Nota bene.—Eggs should always be broken into separate basins lest they be not good.

Pass on, eggs, and all's well! Each gives forth a decent odour.

Add to it the flour.

Lo! a pond or yellow puddle, and the teacher is obeyed.

Then put half the milk to it—very gradually.

And the pond rises, and flows over.

Stirring until it is smooth, and beat well.

Clatter, clatter, clatter—round and round go the spoons.

At last the word is given that all is well with the batter; baking-tins are got ready; hot fat, specially clarified, is poured into them; and then in flows the viscous batter, and thence into the oven. Bang goes the door—the Yorkshire pudding is a-baking.

The little cooks were then divided into two great parties.

One carried away the dirty bowls, spoons, and boards to the scullery.

The other was split up into small groups set to work on the order for the plum cake. Some saw to the flour, others cut the candied peel, others stoned raisins, and never did professed *chefs* perform their duties with more skill, I am sure. And when at last these ingredients were ready, they, too, carried away the dirty things to the scullery, and the whole class was engaged in washing up.

Now, cooking in a nice clean kitchen, with good utensils, and ample material, is really very pleasant and even exciting work, whether you are going to partake of the result or no—as in the case of poor Soyer. Was not the great Dumas a famous *chef*? And the late Mr. George Augustus Sala? But I never remember that any one of these gentlemen, ardent as they were in the pursuit of the culinary art, ever mentioned the washing up. No; that dirty work is generally left to the poor menials.

And even *they* have been known to turn at the orgie of grease and slops.

‘It is ill housewifery to foul your kitchen rubbers with wiping the bottom of the dishes you send up, since the table-cloth will do as well, and is changed every week. Never clean your spits after they have been used; for the grease left upon them by meat is the best thing to preserve them from rust, and when you make use of them again the same grease will keep the inside of the meat moist.’ I quote from the Dean of St. Patrick’s ironical directions to servants. Too many of them still take his advice in all seriousness.

Why, I have actually seen it stated in some paper or other that even certain little Board school maids had struck against this portion of the curriculum. Whether the report spoke the truth or not, I am unable to tell you, but all I can say is that these little cooks under my own eye not only did not rebel, but took the greatest pleasure in washing up.

‘Give it elbow grease,’ said the stalwart maid who waited on the teacher—she superintending ‘the dirty work.’ ‘Give it elbow grease, there’s a dear.’ And so the little one did. She was cleaning knives on the knife-board.

‘Rub-a-dub-dub’ went the knife—‘rub-a-dub-dub,’ backwards and forwards, again and again.

‘What *is* elbow grease?’ asked the maid.

‘Puttin’ hard work into it,’ came the answer, and off went the knife again on its journeys.

‘Keep the edge *from* you, when wipin’,’ said the good woman at a later stage. ‘Keep the edge from you—always bear *that* in mind.’

‘*That’s* not the way to clean a knife—keep it in the middle of the board’—this to another.

‘Wipe the knife on both sides’—to a third, and so on. Then some carried pails of hot water hither and thither; some stood over the sink washing plates and bowls; others dried (most thoroughly); others scrubbed the pastry boards to a snow-white colour. Nay, there was one tiny maid—a regular Cinderella—who could scarcely be induced to leave the fire-place which she was washing. I suppose she liked the heat. It was a busy, cheerful scene, and in a very short time every article was put in its place; plates, boards, bowls, knives, forks; the sink was as clean as a new pin; you could have eaten your dinner off the dresser, as the saying goes; and—the Yorkshire pudding was ready.

Twelve halfpence were collected from as many of the little cooks; the teacher placed twelve pieces of clean white paper on the dresser. And then that glorious pudding—light as a feather, of a nice yellow and deep tan in colour, and frizzling hot

—was cut up into twelve portions—and they who did make, did eat thereof.

Then came pinafore drill. Little cooks stood in Indian file. At the word of command each one unlaced her neighbour's ; each one folded her own up ; each one took it to the locker. Whilst they were thus engaged I turned over the exercise books, and found written in twenty different styles of caligraphy the following golden words :

BOILING POTATOES

1. Choose potatoes of equal size. If some are larger than others, put them in a few minutes before the smaller ones.

2. Peel them very thinly to preserve the gluten.

3. They must never be cut, because the starch within the gluten absorbs the water so readily.

4. Put them into boiling water to keep the gluten firm, and leave them plenty of room to swell.

5. Boil them gently and evenly to prevent them breaking.

6. Try them with a skewer, and if done strain and shake them.

7. Put the pan near the fire about ten minutes, leaving a clean soft cloth on the top to absorb the steam.

And I have actually heard stern mistresses declare, in a temper, referring to the new cook, 'that she can't even boil a potato.' I gather, however, that an operation which the ordinary male mind would regard as very simple has given rise to a controversy as little and as useless as the famous

differences between the 'big-endians' and the 'little-endians.' *Chefs* and culinary artists who read this, then, let the potato recipe pass in peace. But who would have thought that such a humble root should have led to such shocking discord?

'Tis half-past four, though, and now, in shawl and hat, the little cooks go forth into the chill night air; some eating pudding; others watching them. May they ever remember the good old saying that 'God sends meat and the devil sends cooks,' and listen well to their most patient instructress in the most comforting of all arts! And, above all, may they ever have a dinner upon which to exercise their skill!

THE HOUSE WITH FOUR ROOMS

Down in that gray wilderness of bricks and mortar we call Bethnal Green (it *was* green, perhaps, in remote ages) is a certain four-roomed house, in which the girls of the quarter are daily instructed in the mysteries of housekeeping. It is a most delightful establishment, I do assure you—a truly model dwelling. There is a cosy parlour, nicely furnished, which is swept and dusted twice daily for five days a week. Could the most critical mistress ask for more? There are bedrooms in which the beds are made with equal frequency. There is the kitchen (with the usual appurtenances), which is also faithfully dealt with by numerous zealous little women.

Come into this parlour with me. Phew! what a dust, to be sure!

‘Selina Littlechild—come here,’ says the lady who is so kindly introducing me to these busy scenes.

Thereupon a little maiden in a neat mob cap

and a nice print pinafore steps towards us, broom in hand.

‘What is dust, Selina?’ says the lady.

‘Dust, m’m?’ lisps Selina—whose golden locks were full of it in spite of the mob cap. ‘Dust, m’m?’

‘Well—take Bethnal Green dust,’ I venture to hint.

‘Soot, sir,’ she answers, with confidence. ‘And sand, and dried vegetable refuse.’

‘But it differs with the neighbourhood, doesn’t it?’ says the lady.

‘Yes—m’m. When we lived in Stratford it was iron mostly.’ Then Selina supplemented this fact by another remarkable bit of information. ‘Father says he knew a man in Sheffield who was killed by dust. He was internally cut by it, m’m, and died in ag’ny, m’m.’

‘Oh!’ says m’m (with a smile)—in whose presence—though she is Mrs. Lord—the Superintendent, no less—with armies of little housewives under her control—the ready Selina is not in the least abashed. ‘Oh!’

‘Tell me, Selina, tell me—supposing you had a nice little house of your own’ (here Selina blushed and smiled prettily), ‘how would you divide your week’s work?’

Selina took thought for a moment, and then

proceeded, marking each day upon her fingers. 'On Monday, m'm, I should put the dirty clothes to steep, and—do out the parlour.' Then down went the little finger. 'On Tuesday I should do the washing, getting up very early so as to get a good start.' And down went the thumb—symbolical of hard labour. 'On Wednesday I should iron, and mangle—if I had a mangle. On Thursday I should do the bedroom. On Friday the scullery, and the knives and forks, and the spoons. And on Saturday I should clean up the passage, and polish up the front door—unless we lived in a "model"—and do my best to get finished before'—here the long finger disappeared, and Selina looked through her long eyelashes at Mrs. Lord—'before *he* come home.'

Ah! Selina, I greatly suspect by thy tell-tale cheeks that thou hast already an affair on hand. Well—let us hope that the new generation of husbands and wives will do credit to this famous period of Free Education.

Selina Littlechild drops a curtsey, and resumes her duties. Mary Roxbury, of a plainer cast, is summoned to our side. She, I am informed, proposes domestic service as her career in life. At all events, it is to be her start, she thinks. However, this four-roomed house is not intended as a manufactory for the production of servants. It is a

school for the raising of the standard of the workers' homes. Surely a most praiseworthy, a most desirable object.

But to return to Mary Roxbury.

'Tell us how you sweep a carpeted room, Mary?' says Mrs. Lord.

Mary is a blunt sort of person; with a resolute jaw, an erect head, and very intelligent eyes which look you full in the face. 'Treat *me* well, and I'll do the same by you,' they seemed to say. 'But none of your games with Mary Roxbury. *She* knows her rights.' Between ourselves (of course I am not so ungallant as to give you her real name), she began her training in the domestic arts by going out a-step-cleaning—twopence a set, and find your own soap and bucket. That is a rough school, if you like, and had it not been for these practical housewifery lessons I dare say Mary would have drifted into the charring profession, which, as we all know, is very low down in the social scale. What self-respecting girl in these times would contemplate her two shillings a day and her beer with aught but aversion? Listen to her now.

'Mary, tell us how you would sweep a carpeted room?'

Mary screwed up her brow, scratched the end of her nose (a mere smudge) with the sharpest

corner of a dust-pan, and, setting her right foot well forward, made the following declaration in deliberate tones :

Place the furniture in the middle of the room or the passage.

Remove the ornaments.

Pin up the curtains.

Cover the furniture with a dust sheet.

Open the windows top and bottom.

Sprinkle the carpet with tea-leaves.

Sweep gently with a long-handled stiff broom.

Use a short stiff brush to finish sweeping, and take up the dust on a dust-pan.

I can see a certain class of mistresses (the *very* prim and precise ones, you know) hold up their hands, and say : ‘ Oh yes !—all very fine—but that is mere theory.’ But, my dear madam, are not these four little maidens in mob caps and pinafores at this very moment engaged in carrying out these admirable rules ? The furniture is in the middle of the parlour ; the curtains are pinned up ; the window is open at top and bottom ; the tea-leaves are on the carpet.

And now to the bedroom, where three more little maidens are making the bed—long-suffering, much-tumbled bed.

‘ Esther Hopkins—Grace Harris—Daisy—stop please,’ says Mrs. Lord. They are very much out of breath, but listen with profound attention to

the Mistress of Mistresses. 'I want to see now if you can tell me how a bed should be made. You—Daisy—what is the first thing to think of before you *begin* to make one?'

'Be sure that your hands are clean, m'm.'

'Quite right—and your apron too. Now—go on. What do you do now?'

'Take the clothes from the foot of the bed and throw them over two chairs.'

'And how should the chairs be placed?'

'Back to back.'

I looked and saw that this was no mere form of words. The two chairs *were* back to back.

'And then——?'

'Shake the bed well from opposite corners—towards the middle.'

This in chorus. As a matter of fact we had interrupted them in the very act.

'And what will you do next—go and show us?' The housemaids proceeded to turn the bed over very carefully.

'Why do you do that?' says Mrs. Lord.

'To get the lumps and 'ollows out.'

Who would ever wake if all beds were thus tended?

I was then hurried off to the kitchen, a practical kitchen, with real pots, and pans, and plates; and a real oven; with a real dresser, and

real cupboards; with real fire-irons; and a real scullery leading out of it. How busy they all were—half a dozen more little maids! One was cleaning the hearth, one was scrubbing the dresser, one was polishing up the fender, one was washing up the dinner things (the teachers dine here), one was wiping them dry, one was carefully putting them away in the racks. What a clatter! What a scene of pleasant activity! What wives some of them will make!

‘Silence!’ cried Mrs. Lord—and then we had more interviews, if I may use that professional word. Let me give you some household wrinkles. ‘Elizabeth Cross,’ says the Superintendent, laying her hand on Elizabeth’s shoulder—‘what is the first thing to remember in preparing a table for dinner?’

‘Lay the cloth even, m’m.’

‘Next?’

‘If you have a large cruet place it in the middle of the table. Then put the salt-cellars—if you have more than one—at opposite corners with a salt-spoon on the top, and two large tablespoons in opposite directions on either side.’

‘And then?’

‘Put your silver—if you’ve got any—round the table, and a dessert spoon and fork opposite where each person will sit. The knives are placed on the

right of the forks, and the carving knife and fork opposite father.'

And not only could Elizabeth Cross, though only rising twelve, lay a table with the best of them, but she is also uncommonly well up in behaviour. I have before me a passage from her writings evincing a depth of knowledge which is perfectly Chesterfieldian in its profundity. Listen! The passage, which is entitled 'The Etiquette of the Dinner Table,' runs as follows:

Be careful not to soil the table-cloth with your fingers.

Do not attempt to speak when your mouth is full, and be sure to turn your head when you cough or sneeze.

Do not fill your glasses too full, and thus cause a spill on the cloth.

Keep your seat until all have finished.

If you do wish to leave the room (this has quite a Pepysian flavour about it) pray to be excused.

Place your chair quietly in its place when you have finished.

If only those golden rules were faithfully observed, homes would be sweet indeed.

But to resume examination.

'Who can tell me what the meaning of the word "thrift" is?' says Mrs. Lord.

'That we should not waste our food, but should put it away so that it may do next day.'

'A very good answer. What would you do with egg-shells—quick?'

‘ Use ’em for cleanin’ bottles.’

‘ Tea-leaves ? ’

‘ For carpets.’

‘ Stale bread ? ’

‘ Puddings—poultices.’

Much laughter at Daisy Waite, who offered this example. She has a truly frugal mind, and has evidently made thrift a study. Mrs. Lord picked up a pile of manuscript which was lying on the dresser, and, selecting Daisy’s copybook, handed it to me. The very first passage I light upon is this : ‘ In a stocking as soon as they are looking thin or a hole coming you should darn them neatly or if your dress sew it up *directly* ’ (underlined) ‘ before it gets bigger besides it looks much better than to see a hole.’ Then come some supplementary maxims. ‘ You can always look nice as long as your hair is tidy and your face clean, also your clothes tidy your boots ’ (no stops in the original) ‘ should also look nice always shiny and your heels nice and straight.’

Ahem ! I was too polite to draw attention to a very decided hole in a certain portion of Daisy’s left s g ! Human nature—how very frail thou art ! Hush ! Let us say no more. Perhaps it is as well that there are other scenes of pleasant labour to be visited.

For instance, there is a real laundry down-

stairs in which some thirty more little maidens are bending over as many washtubs. And yet how different from other real laundries that I have seen ! So spacious, so lofty, so clean ! And the walls are covered with pictures and tables in big letters, setting forth the commandments which the good laundress should observe, dealing with the mysteries of clear starching, the beauties of blue, the use of soda, the properties of water. What is that hideous cartoon ? Ah ! I see—a picture, perfectly Dantean, of the human frame as it is after years of tight-lacing. And that other ? A symmetrical presentment of the human frame as God ordained it. 'Tis well to keep these invaluable hints ever before the feminine mind, which, though but rising twelve, ever inclineth to vanity and the *petite*. I see also another cartoon portraying the female foot as it is usually distorted in civilized communities, another pictorial lesson which 'tis well to keep before Board school misses. Even though the daily boot may show a comfortable gap or two, in the matter of the *Sunday* ones danger ever lurks.

But these observations and reflections were interrupted by a loud 'Hush !' from Mrs. Lord. Thirty pairs of hands stopped like clockwork, and we had a short, sharp lesson in the whole art of washing, which, of course, included many posers on

ironing, starching, mending, drying, and the allied domestic mysteries. Then, too soon, alas ! for this laundry was most enthralling in its interest, I was hurried off to another scene, and was presented to a score of little cooks, who were making Irish stew in just such another spacious, spotless kitchen as I have already described. And then we passed into just an ordinary school-room, where I found another set of little housewives, all attired in those nice mob caps and long print pinafores, all seated at their desks, all following, with keen zest, the remarks of the teacher upon the ventilation of rooms.

And after the lesson was over they all adjourned to the four-roomed house, and did it.

And now, I hope, you will have formed some idea as to the manner in which the invaluable and wholesome art of housewifery is taught under the enlightened *régime* of the London School Board.

The combination which I have so hurriedly described is to be seen at present only in Bethnal Green, and may be regarded as an experiment. Of course, there are school laundries by the score, dotted about in all parts of London ; and cooking kitchens ; but here in Bethnal Green you have in addition the four-roomed house.

Just before my visit an examination had been held upon the work done. Allow me to present to

your notice just a few passages from a heap of manuscripts which Mrs. Lord was good enough to place in my hands.

This, for instance, is how Selina Littlechild would bake a haddock:

I would get a nice haddock—FRESH (underlined twice in red ink)—wash it, take off the scales, cut off the head and clean the inside of it, next you would dry the haddock. To make the stuffing would be to get an egg, herbs, breadcrumbs, mix the joke (!) of the egg with the herbs and breadcrumb, then you would put all the stuffing inside the fish and sew it up, put it in a tin, with fat over and keep basting it now and then. Time to cook $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour.

Mary Roxbury's idea of a dinner for six persons if she had two shillings to spend runs in this direction. Here is the extract from her *memoranda* showing the various items:

| | s. | d. |
|--|-------|----|
| 2 lbs. of neck a mutton 8d. per lb. . | 1 | 4 |
| 4 lbs. of potatoes | 0 | 3 |
| carrot and turnip and onian . . | 0 | 1 |
| rhubarb | 0 | 3 |
| $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of moist sugar | 0 | 1 |
| | <hr/> | |
| | 2 | 0 |

Mary, after some hesitation (I judge by the state of the manuscript) elects to have a boiled dinner.

I would (she writes) put the saucepan with some water on to boil, scrap the carrot and skin the onian and peel the turnip, cut all these up in pieces not too large. Then you would take the fat off the meat, next put the meat and vegetables on to boil, do not let them boil too fast. Next

you would peel the potatoes, don't put them on too soon, and with a piece of salt in the water. I should then see to the rhubarb, to stew it would be to cut the rhubarb up in pieces, put it into a dish with a little water and sugar, and put it in the oven.

And if mother were ill and Esther Hopkins suddenly found herself responsible for the proper conduct of the household, what do you think she would do? Her utmost, she declares, her very best, to be useful. Here followeth the manifesto :

The first thing would be to tidy (never mind the spelling) the room for breakfast then get breakfast and take some up to mother (no stops of any kind here, but what do *they* matter; Esther is out of breath, that's all) the next thing would be to wash tem (!) up (what a hurry she's in) then make the beds, then see about the dinner if I had to buy a dinner (no stops anywhere to be seen) I should buy some meat for a stew so that mother could have some then cook the dinner take all the things off the table you have had for cooking and lay the table take some up to mother clear away and wash up and do the kitchen up thoroughly. (A stop at last! She rests, this little one, just for a minute.) Then I should sit with mother and do needlework after a time I should get the tea ready take some up to mother and then clear away then I should make something for mother such as beef tea and then the children and father would be home and I would spend the rest of the day in reading until it was time to go to bed unless mother wanted me.

Yes, surely work such as this will be of service to Society in the time to come!

BABIES AND THE A.B.'S

Not until the child is five years old does the Law demand that its education shall begin. But thousands of them toddle daily to school who have not yet reached that mature age. I doubt not that anxious mothers whose lot calls them to the factory, the wash-tub, the scrubbing-brush, are thankful enough that their little ones are well cared for during their absence. In some of the Infant Schools they even have a nursery in which veritable babies of two or little more are tended, and even taught. So poor, so white, so forlorn many of them look. The toys they play with have the same hopeless, joyless air. This doll, though still in her youth, though tiny she may be, is already doubled up with the cares and blows of a hard world. Her face is thick with dirt, her hair is tousled, her garments are but rags and patches. That other—some rich child's cast off—has lost a head; that an arm, a leg; and one has but a trunk. And from that the sands of life—the sawdust, I should say—are swiftly running out. The woolly elephant is

trunkless, the wooden tiger's body alone remains, the cat of ragged remnants scarcely holds together.

But let us leave the nurseries and watch these thirty bigger babies—they are not much more—say four or so. They are boys and girls, most of them very clean and very tidy. Aye, and many of the girls are pretty, too, as any child of the West, and bear about their little persons many a humble sign of that vanity which so enhances beauty. I refer to golden little fringes, golden earrings, bits of gay ribbon, or velvet. Why spoil the picture by noting a few exceptions, or by any saturnine reflections upon such lowly matters as boots? Then some of the little boys wear nice white ruffles for collars—I know not the draper's term for them; it is astonishing what a collar will do for a boy.

In front of each pupil is a zinc tray full of sand and a wooden mould. On the teacher's table is a pretty toy sea-piece. A sea—of green glass—flows smoothly in one corner, and upon its surface sail two paper boats. The shore is of real sand and shells of various sorts, with a few rocks jutting out here and there, and a little sea-weed just to carry out the illusion. Commanding this sea-scape is a Coastguard station, trimly kept, as such places are wont to be. There rises the tall mast, with the British flag waving at the peak; there stands the house for the watchful Coastguardsmen; and there

is one of the Coastguardsmen himself—he is on duty, I suppose, whilst his comrades are sleeping—and all round grow bright green trees.

The proceedings are opened by a little song, simple enough, but very pleasant when sung by thirty little voices. It runs thus :

Folded is each little hand,
All around the room,
We shall now play with the sand
This happy afternoon.
We may make a little pie,
Or a pudding, too,
Place the moulds where they may lie
Each in front of you.

‘ONE!’ says the teacher. ‘Fill up the moulds with sand.’

A pleasant clatter followed this order, and then the teacher goes on : ‘Have you all got the sand in?—keep the mould in the tray—now, show me your two thumbs.’

Sixty little thumbs were lifted on high.

‘Now, when I say Two, press the sand down in the moulds—are you ready?—attention—two!’

And sixty little thumbs pressed the sand down into the moulds.

‘Nice and smooth, nice and smooth—and now, when I say Three, turn up the moulds—THREE!’

And the moulds were duly turned bottom upwards.

‘Show me your right hands—up—up—now double your fists.’

And there was a fine show of thirty miniature fists.

‘And now beat the mould—one, two, three.’

And thrice did each little fist deal a blow to the bottom of each mould.

‘Now lift the mould off the tray.’

And the moulds were lifted off the tray, and thirty beautiful pudding-like mounds were revealed.

‘What are those made of?’

‘Sand, teacher.’

‘And where does it come from?’

No answer.

‘When mother saves a nice bit of money, where will she take you to? To—to—to the—Sea.’

‘To THE SEA, Teacher.’

‘Now, what do you call this?’ pointing to that smooth sheet of green glass. ‘Have any of you ever seen anything like it before. Who can tell me what it is?’

‘Thalt water,’ lisped a few.

‘Yes—and we call it the sea. And when you’re all a little bigger and mother has put by that nice bit of money’—this in a rather saturnine undertone—‘she’ll take you down to look at it. Oh! it’s such a large piece of water.’

At this point I was privately informed that one

little girl who had been down to Margate once upon a time had, on returning to London, exclaimed, 'Oh, I've seen such a big pond!'

'Now, you've seen the water flowing under London Bridge—who's been on London Bridge? All of you? Well, is *that* the sea? No—we call that the river—the—?'

'RIVER.'

'And you see boats, and ships, and steamers on it. And what else—on the banks? Warehouses, wharves—where father works. Well—and on the sea there are boats, and ships, and steamers—but no warehouses or wharves. No—it is oh! such a big piece of water. And the shores are—sand—just the same as you have in your trays—and when you grow bigger—and your mothers have saved up a nice bit of money—they'll take you down to play on the sand which forms the shore of the sea. Little children are very fond of playing with it, and make houses with it, and gardens, and all sorts of things. And you can look for shells—like these'—pointing to the sea-scape beside her. 'And now, look at this'—indicating the Coastguard station. 'It is higher than the sea, and all day long men in blue, with round hats on their heads, walk up and down, watching the sea through a big spy-glass.' Here the wooden men are introduced. 'Now, who can tell me what they are looking for?'

And a few lisped out—‘Thips.’

‘Yes—they’re looking out for ships. Now if there were no ships we should have to go without many nice things—oranges, fish, tea—many many things that are good to eat and drink. Who can tell me what father puts in his pipe?’

‘BACCA.’ I think everyone spoke at once.

‘Yes—but we make them pay for bringing tobacco here, and some wicked people try and land it on the sea-shore without paying. They are trying to cheat—it is these naughty men that the men in blue are looking for.’

And so ended the object-lesson for the time being, and, hearing sounds of singing in the room where the very smallest babies—aged three—were assembled, we paid them a visit. Listen to a babies’ song :

Now, children, touch your head, chin, nose,
Shake fingers, touch your knees, your toes,
Hold your right leg, then the other,
This little leg to that is brother ;
Hold up your left hand, then the right,
Clasp elbows, show your eyes all bright ;
Now cross your arms upon your breast,
Next heads on hands to go to rest.
Now fold up hands, and make two fists,
Then do like teacher, hold two wrists,
All wag your heads, now nod, now sigh,
Come show me how the babies cry.

What ingenuities are devised for the benefit of

these tiny ones! Strips of coloured cardboard with which they make their letters; sticks, too; beads—red, green, white, blue—to thread—to learn the mysteries of counting and colour. Look at the tiny thimbles which the teacher now distributes, with a needle and a bit of canvas! And listen to the Needle Drill:

Which hand should hold our cotton now? of course it is the
right,

And in the left the needle, with its little eye upright.

Then to the eye the cotton goes when teacher kind says
'two,'

And by the time she's counted 'three' we get the cotton
through.

The needle's eye must rest upon our little thimbles bright,

The point our thumb and finger holds to guide it through
aright.

Patient must be she who teaches these tiny ones—with the eyes of Argus; with a good singing voice which never wearies. She is truly their good mother, and often enough washes them, tidies them up, and puts them to bed in the cot yonder, when little bodies are weary of the day's labours. They are none too well nourished, I dare swear; slumbers at home may be often broken.

But they are learning the Time in another room—rising six they are.

How do they read the clock?

Let us see.

A large outer circle is formed by the class. An inner circle is made with chalk. At intervals the Roman numerals are placed as on the face of the clock. Twelve children have corresponding numbers hanging round their necks, and stand opposite the numbers in the ring. Two children representing Long Hand and Short Hand respectively, and bearing a pasteboard long and short hand, step inside the ring in their turn. A string bearing five large wooden balls is placed between each child, making sixty balls in all, which are the minutes. Chimes are introduced at the quarters ; a bell strikes the hour.

And the works which move this human clock are some simple verses fitted to a cheerful tune :

Children, let us form a ring,
Gaily let us dance and sing ;
We the time must learn to-day,
So merrily, merrily march away.
First the face we form, you see,
In a circle wide and free ;
Lazy Short Hand then steps out,
Long Hand briskly turns about.

One and two, three and four,
Side by side upon the floor ;
Five and six, seven, eight,
Nine, ten, eleven, twelve, face numbers then.
Now we must our minutes place,
Five of each shall fill each space,
Long Hand sixty steps must take,
While Short Hand but the five can take.

Now you may see why they want pianos in Board schools—not, as so many people believe, to teach the children music, but to give the time, to throw a little fire into the lesson. The pretty scheme for teaching time is the idea of the Head Mistress, Mrs. Newbould, music, verses, and all. They are inventive, these mistresses.

Let us pass on to still another room—full of babies—pretty big ones—who are knitting. Even in this work the lesson may be musical, though it is but the *vox humana*, simple and unaccompanied. Hum the well-known tune of ‘Oh ! dear, what can the matter be’—a most appropriate air, to be sure—to the following words, and imagine the knitting needles, and so on. You will then be able to form an excellent idea of the methods of Baby Teaching.

Now, Jane, look at our left hands, and,
Now, Jane, look at our right hands, and,
Now, Jane, watch what we do with them.

See that you do as we tell.

Thro’ the next stitch, Jenny, let the right needle go,
Then o’er its tip, Jenny, you must the cotton throw,
Draw the loop thro’ on the tip of the needle, so,
Slip off the old stitch as well.

Poetry and music teach the young idea how to shoot, indeed. And when a body’s tired of lessons only, even once more those arts are practised.

As thus :

If a body's tired of lessons,
Somewhat long and dry,
Should a body fret and fidget ?
Need a body cry ?
No ! put down your seam or knitting,
Put down book or pen,
Do a little exercising,
You'll feel better then.
Pull back shoulders, straighten elbows ;
Twist your hands around ;
Raise your faces towards the ceiling,
Turn them towards the ground.
Turn to left hand, turn to right hand,
Face to front ; then stop.
Raise both hands in air so gently,
Then as gently drop.

When this pretty drill is over the class tries its 'th's'—they are so very difficult. 'Put out your tongues—all of you, please,' says the mistress. 'Now, when I say One, put them in again—and catch the tip with the teeth—and breathe hard—ONE.' That is how they get the troublesome th's. The old Cockney habit of saying 'v' instead of 'w' is slowly disappearing—shade of Tony Veller ! No longer does Willy White become Villy Vite.

I am much indebted to Mrs. Newbould, the headmistress of the infants in Lant Street, Southwark, for a most interesting, amusing afternoon, which was also not without its pathetic moments.

FITTING THE UNFIT

My eye fell by chance on a poor little hunchback far away in the dimmest corner of the schoolroom. His mouth made no sign nor gave forth any sound. With lack-lustre eyes he followed the quick beats of the ferule, and but for the occasional twitch of a head which gave him a top-heavy appearance he never moved. When the ringing strains of some chorus or other had died away, I went quietly up to the silent one and found him crouched up on his seat, head down, twiddling his thumbs in aimless circles.

‘One of the *dullards*,’ said the master, in an ominous whisper. ‘How’s your head to-day, Dicky?’ he went on, gently tapping the hunchback on the shoulder. Dicky looked up, and rolling his eyes, set his teeth together, and emitted a loud buzz. ‘B-z-z-z-z-z.’

Then a poor smile and a little flush of pleasure, which this trifling attention had called up to his pallid cheeks, was chased away by the tumult of another lesson. His face twitched, he thrust his

thumbs into his ears, and once more hung down his head.

This tiny hunchback was one of the unfit. The active, restless boys, full of health and life and spirits, stupefied him. No games could he ever play—he could only just crawl home; no lessons could he learn—‘B-z-z’ were the only letters of the alphabet he thoroughly understood—those dreadful letters, so awfully significant. ‘B-z-z-z-z.’

‘What will you do with him?’ I asked.

‘Not so long ago I should have done nothing,’ was the answer. ‘I should have sent him home as hopeless. Now he will go to the school for dullards.’

Yes, they call them ‘dullards’ in School Board circles. Now, all work and no play notoriously make a dull boy. Then again, all play and no work *might* (I say so with profound deference to any youthful critic who happens to read this) also produce very undesirable results. But, alas! I soon found that ‘dullard’ is only a pleasant and soothing word for something much worse than mere dulness. Besides hunchbacks, there are the partly paralysed; there are those who can speak and won’t speak, or think they can’t speak; there are those with one leg shorter than the other; there are those who limp into school on crutches;

there are many who wear enormous boots which would support a giant; there are those with heads a size too big; and some again, a size too little. In fact, whether you take the exterior form, or the inward spirit—there is present some crooked trait or other, which has rendered its unhappy possessor unfit for the strife and struggle of every-day life. Wicked fairies have hovered over their cradles as in the old, old days; twisted this one, bent that one; physically—morally. One of them is very well known indeed—Mistress Anæmia they call her—a wan, pale, shade—genius of Famine, who with clammy fingers sets her mark upon innumerable victims. But legion are the evil shapes which flit hither and thither through the murky byways of this vast city, by day and by night, doing incredible mischief.

Now let us see how the Good Spirit meets this host in strenuous combat.

‘Is it worth while?’ asks the utilitarian.

Let us see.

By a piece of good fortune I fell into the hands of Mrs. Burgwin, the very alert and sympathetic lady who is responsible to us citizens for the mental welfare of these poor dullards. Up and down the town she paces—North, South, East, West—from morn till eve, weeding out the weak, gathering them together, testing them, classifying them,

setting them on their feet, in these special schools. For many years in various capacities she has served the Board, and there can be few who know child-life so well.

One chill afternoon I met her by appointment at that 'Elephant' whither all roads do seem to lead, crossed at once into the New Kent Road, and in a minute found myself in a dull street, whose silence was in strange contrast to the ceaseless tumult of the great highways. On one side towered a sombre block of endless tenements; facing it rose a big school from which proceeded the hum of children's voices. In one quiet corner of this building the dull boys and girls whom I had come to see were at work. They occupied three rooms, which were approached by a pleasant little hall, whose walls were covered with pictures; and I was glad to see that a piano was given the place of honour.

'Well,' said Mrs. Burgwin, who is a very practical woman, 'we will begin at the beginning, I think.'

So we went unannounced into the lowest of the three classes into which these unfit children happened to be divided. The small room contained some thirty of them, whose ages ranged from three to ten, I suppose. To my unaccustomed eye they seemed to be as other children, but I soon

discovered my mistake. However, we did not interrupt the lesson, but stood behind the teacher and listened. All eyes were fixed upon a live chameleon, which sat on a bed of cotton wool, changing his colours every moment. He was obviously embarrassed by his first appearance in public, and turned now a vivid green, then a sunny yellow—I suppose we may call it blushing. Modest chameleon! And he rolled those great orbs of his in a curious, inquiring way as the teacher stroked him softly, asking plainly what sort of a world he was in. I do not wonder, for he had just landed from Africa, and must miss the tropic skies sadly, and the torrid sun in which he loves to bask. Poor chameleon! to be thus deprived of thy sweet liberty, to serve as an object-lesson for dullards. Life, indeed, is full of quick changes. But in a moment out came his long, long tongue, and down into the depths of his beautiful green body disappeared a juicy meal-worm. And then he settled down to work, and gave his whole attention to the matter in hand.

‘Hands under the desk,’ says the teacher. ‘Now, look at it, children, and tell me if you have ever seen anything like it before,’ holding the wonderful creature up on high.

Some hung down their heads abashed, some buried them altogether; there was a confused

murmuring, and then one pretty little girl, whose head was running over with golden curls, put out a tiny hand, and whispered :

‘B—b—b—.’ She hesitated for some painful moments, and then out came the rest of the word, ‘—u n n y—Bunny.’ She was close to us, or we should never have heard it.

‘No, no,’ smiled the teacher.

Then three others made a venture.

‘A nanny-goat !’

‘A HORSE !’—this as if it was indeed an inspiration.

‘A monkey.’

What inexhaustible patience must the teacher be endowed with ! She tries again. ‘What is this ?—Yes ; a tail.’ The chameleon must have heard, for he gave that organ a timely wag, which evoked one or two cheerful little laughs. ‘And this ?—Yes ; a *mouth*—not a *mouf*, dears.’ Then she turned to us and exclaimed : ‘Oh, those *ths*, Mrs. Burgwin !—oh, those *ths* !’ But by this time the class was weary, and wanted a change. For no lesson lasts more than five minutes. The chameleon was put to bed, and so we tried a little arithmetic.

A giant’s head of wood, with great ogling eyes, a red nose, and a gaping mouth, was placed upon the ground, and we threw coloured balls of worsted

into the capacious orifice. This seems a most attractive method of learning addition and subtraction, mysteries which are long in penetrating those dull minds. But how obvious it is even to the meanest comprehension that if you have three lumps of sugar which are your property, and generously feed the giant with two of them, you yourself must be satisfied with the one that remains in your hand. By such a simple operation number, colour, taste may be evolved. From sugar to worsted balls is but a step; and thence the long and weary road leads to strokes, and those curious, curly, O-like figures which signify numbers and values. But endless are the pathetic ingenuities which bring a little light into the dark places. Fingers are, I understand, very useful for their arithmetical discourses; and toes perhaps, which peep plaintively out into this wicked world through many a poor shoe; and above all, dots. Let the brain buzz as it will, let limbs twitch, let heads ache, let backs be weary, yet a dot is not difficult to make—so like many other humble and lowly things in this world—it is found to be a very useful, a very handy article in dull circles. Then those beautiful coloured pictures which hang on the wall serve to point many a moral, to adorn many a tale, to tell many a simple story, to elicit many a simple fact.

The class is weary again, and very restless—the five minutes have gone—eyes wander, heads hang down—so we all rise and sing our vowels in cheerful unison. Then we all say such funny words as *ump, bump*; and proceed to *mat, pen, tam, nap, nut*; and then we try those troublesome *ths*. They are teasers, if you like. Then the little girl who mistook the chameleon for a rabbit—being *dux* in this class—busied herself, though both her legs were awry, went to the cupboard and brought out an armful of cards, which she distributed among her fellow-pupils. On each of them was a horse, a cow, a dog (he is carrying one of his master's boots—the faithful animal), a flower, an elephant, and so on, and, armed with needle-pointed instruments, began to prick out the various outlines. This sounds all very easy, but the point is very apt to wander: man is endowed with impossible tails, as in days gone by; horses become possessed with horns; donkeys go without ears; elephants are trunkless. Why, it takes days for a dullard even to dot the corners of a square.

With this fact I leave you to imagine the pleasure with which these patient teachers welcome the first dawn of intelligence. For in nearly every case it surely comes at last, though many of this class could not even utter a sound when they first came to school.

‘When they can write a simple letter to their father and mother I begin to feel satisfied,’ said Mrs. Burgwin. Such is the vaulting ambition of this excellent woman.

Then we went into another room very much like the first, in which the second division was at work. The children were a little bigger and a little older; and the light was slowly dawning upon them. But so slowly. They were taking a lesson in the time, and all eyes were fixed upon a model of a clock face which was imprinted on a square board.

‘Now all look once more, please,’ said the teacher, for our entrance had upset them all for a moment. ‘What is the clock made of?’

‘Wood, teacher,’ answered a dozen.

‘You, Selina, tell me what shape it is.’

‘ROUND, teacher.’

‘Now just listen attentively. When a person comes into a room what part do we look at?’

‘THE FACE.’ All hands but one or two were held up at this absurdly easy question.

‘Well, look at *my* face—what do you see there?’

‘A NOSE, EYES, MOUTH, EARS.’

‘Now can you tell me whether a clock has got a nose, or eyes, or mouth, or ears?’

‘No, teacher. HANDS!’

‘Hands! Quite right. Now, how many hands have you got?’

‘Two, teacher,’ for, remarkable to say, it happened that in this class the hands were correct in number.

‘And the clock—how many?’

‘Two.’

‘Look well at the clock again, please, and then tell me whether the clock’s hands are like ours.’

‘One’s shorter than the other.’

The hands were then set to midday, and the whole class shouted, ‘Twelve o’clock.’ Then round the clock they went, and counted the hours readily enough. But when the two hands pointed to the *half-hours* they were silent and confused. Division drove them well-nigh mad, and many a weary month will pass before the dullards will learn the time. They knew it was not a real clock because it didn’t go ‘tic—tic,’ for it had no works. That mystery had been mastered by some long chain of reasoning which would have put even Euclid himself to shame. From the known to the unknown, step by step the dull child advances most patiently.

‘How is Charlie Littlechild to-day?’ said Mrs. Burgwin.

‘Very bright—Charlie, come here, please.’

So Charlie, a flaxen-haired young man of ten, all smiles and blushes for the moment, stumped forward on a surgical boot. Young he is, but very familiar with hospital wards, doctors, knives, and chloroform, and they tell me that some day school, which he loves so well, will know him no more, and his boot will be passed on to another. Sometimes he folds his hands in the teacher's skirts, and talks of the beautiful home he is going to up amongst the clouds ever so far away from London—that lovely place where there will be no pain to bear, and no tears to shed. He is sure of that. One day not very long ago there was an awful accident near the school, in which a little girl was crushed beneath the wheels of a brewer's dray. Charlie saw it all, and when he came to school he walked quietly up to his mistress, and gravely asked whether God had taken the little girl to Heaven to mend her. You see the workings of that little man's imaginative mind. He himself will never be mended down below.

And one windy day, so the story goes, watching the clouds scudding along from his seat in the room, he suddenly cried out, 'Teacher, teacher, see, look at God's angels flying up to Heaven!' Even in this sombre, murky, toil-stained Lambeth they cannot crush the poet. So you will not wonder if none follow with such

rapt fervour as he the beautiful and fascinating stories from the Bible, which the teacher reads when backs are weary, when humming bees are busy in those poor heads—B-z-z-z-z—when the night is falling.

But when poets come down from the clouds in which they love to soar, and find themselves on mother earth, they are ill-fitted to cope with the common affairs of this life.

‘Now, which is most, Charlie, seven or five?’ said Mrs. Burgwin, taking the poet’s tiny hand in her own.

He looked her in the face, in a doubtful sort of way, hung down his head, raised it again, and murmured ‘*Five.*’ [Will the printer please put this word in very small type?]

‘Well—tell me—which would you rather have, five apples or seven?’

And again he murmured ‘*Five.*’ These poets are truly a perverse, impracticable race.

‘Do you know what this is, Charlie?’

‘A PENNY’—the coin lay on the table.

Then six more pennies were spread out before him.

‘Now, which would you rather have, those’—pointing to the seven—‘or these’—covering two up.

Even the poet was at last convinced that down

below, at all events, seven pence were better worth having than five; that five were more than three; that three were more than one. But it was evidently a difficult lesson, in spite of this demonstration.

After all, he had a soul above mere sordid pence. As a colourist he is a very Turner. They showed me his work done in beautiful folios—flowers and trees, and men and beasts. That is yellow—it is like the sun at noon; that is red, like the sun when he goes to rest; that is blue, like the sky on clear days. Then he knits, and makes baskets, and sews so neatly. And at home he has a linnet which hops on to his finger and sings to him. With this little outburst of confidence Charlie Littlechild stumped back to his seat covered with glory, and very well pleased with himself.

Then up comes a big boy of a very different sort, with a sullen expression in his face as if he had quite determined not to answer any question for anybody—not for Mrs. Burgwin, the awful head; not even for teacher. No, he wouldn't. Not a word vouched he, but stood looking at us.

‘Oh! teacher, tell us what you do with naughty boys?’ said Mrs. Burgwin, turning round to the shocked preceptress.

‘*Why, we send them out of school.*’

Then I saw two tears trickling down the big boy's cheeks ; faster and faster they flowed ; they became a perfect cataract, which actually wetted the floor.

Who ever heard of such a punishment, I should like to know ? Dull of wit, indeed, must the boy be who cries because he has received such a sentence.

‘ Well, if the teacher lets you stop where you are, will you tell us what you had for dinner ? ’

‘ Yuss, governess—meat. ’

‘ Ah ! that's right—meat. And what sort of meat ? ’

He shook his head.

‘ Beef or mutton ? ’

‘ S-h-eep, ’ after some reflecting.

‘ Sheep—yes. ’

Encouragingly—‘ And what else do we get from sheep ? ’

‘ Wool, governess. ’

‘ That's right. You see he can speak when he likes—though when his mother brought him a year or two ago (much against her will, being fearful of this strange school) he could not articulate. ’ And now what a difference ! He has learnt his letters, he can count up to ten, he knows what a sheep is, he can sew, he can say his prayers, and before they have done with him—that is, by the time he is fourteen—he will probably be able to do something

for a living instead of being a useless burden on the State. His ambition is to be a—*policeman*.

But here are two brothers of eleven and twelve, whom the most patient efforts cannot enlighten. They are the unfittest of these little unfit ones, and are very nearly given up as hopeless cases. They stood up at the word of command, and smiled at us vacuously. Perhaps you may remember Wordsworth's verses about Johnny Foy, who was lost in the woods, where he stayed the night, much to the grief of his poor mother Betty. When she found him the next day, cried Betty :

‘ Tell us, Johnny, do,
Where all this long night you have been,
What you have heard, what you have seen ? ’
Now, Johnny all night long had heard
The owls in tuneful concert strive ;
No doubt, too, he the moon had seen,
For in the moonlight he had been
From eight o'clock till five.

‘ The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
And the sun did shine so cold.’
Thus answer'd Johnny——

And thus answer this pair. Cocks to-whoo, donkeys moo, cows bray, dogs mew, cats cry ‘ Bow-wow.’ I put their sad case figuratively.

Then we had a cheerful lesson in natural history, and reasoned from the common shrimp to the voracious shark ; from the humble herring to the

mammoth whale; from the pump-handle to the ocean blue—soared up into the air, dived down into the deep—all in dusky, grimy Lambeth on this winter afternoon. Then, *hey, presto*—we glided into the dark cupboard, and joined the tiny mouse. Why had he got such big ears? To hear the cat coming. Why were his teeth so sharp—like chisels? To gnaw the wood with. Why were his feet so small? It was all profoundly interesting.

And now let us go up higher, and see the fittest of the unfit in the next room. They are making the prettiest mantel borders out of common string, following the teacher's pattern. It seemed to me very intricate work indeed, but scarcely a thread went wrong,—in and out, under and over, two turns to the right, one to the left—then twist into a loop much too complex to describe. But the result is, as I have said, most delightful. *And the work has a market value.* That is a fact which these children all appreciate, and at least six of them informed me that some day they would go into the macrami business—'macrami' being the proper name for those articles. They showed me beautiful sewing, fair exercise books, even sums in addition, subtraction, and multiplication. That way did madness once most surely lie—but see what four long years of assiduous effort have done!

Many of them *can* write a little letter now, and that vaulting ambition hath not o'erleapt itself after all. Pothooks are no more blurred with tears; the dark mysteries of carrying tens have been fathomed; hands have been strengthened, faculties sharpened by much exercise. It is impossible to believe that some of these boys and girls could scarcely articulate in the year of our Lord 1893; had but the feeblest memory; and no sense of responsibility. So not in vain have those patient teachers wrought—the bees busy in their own poor heads bz-z-z-z. If limbs are still crooked, if cheeks are still pale, if ears still sing—yet the minds are at work, and the light is burning fairly.

A proper female vanity has surely been awakened in this young person who struts before us in a new frock, and in that other one who is jealous of some scintillating ornamentation on her mistress's dress. The reason is certainly alive in another, who informs us that (she has just joined the laundry class) she prefers washing to starching or ironing. And why? Because irons are apt to burn; collars must be stiff; while washing needs no thought—rub, rub, rub—all day long. It is ridiculously easy work. Then exactness, obedience have decidedly been deeply implanted in another. She was working in the cookery class, and the

teacher bade her take the potatoes out of the pot. Her hand was almost in the boiling water when it was pulled back. A link was missing. In her hurry the teacher had forgotten to tell her to *get a spoon* and take the potatoes out.

As four o'clock was striking a tall, erect, venerable gentleman, with hair and beard snow-white, marched into the room and was greeted with a general cheer. This was General Moberly, come to pay an afternoon call upon the unfit. They have good reason to cheer him, for he it was, I understand, who first advocated their cause. From one poor child who happened to come under his notice, see what has come about! And remember that these special schools are now to be found in many parts of the town. But the gallant general had come with more than fair words—he had, tucked away under his arm, a great packet of sweets, which he proceeded to distribute. He then took his place by the teacher and cross-examined the class with much geniality upon a visit to the Zoo which they had recently made. Then we all said the Lord's Prayer in the dying light, stepped quietly out into the hall, and sang the evening hymn—the three classes together.

Surely it is worth while!

Picture the poor dullards in the old unenlightened days—locked up in lonely rooms, per-

haps, crouching in corners, turned out into the streets, the sullen, the mischievous, the stupid, the inarticulate—with asylum or workhouse surely looming in the distance.

Picture them now !

THE BLIND

I UNDERSTAND that ere many years have sped by Blind Bartimæus will have disappeared for ever from our streets. No more shall we hear the familiar 'tap! tap!' of his stick upon the hard stones; no more will he occupy cosy corners of busy bridges where passengers crowd the way:

To whom with loud and passionate laments,
From noon till dewy eve his dark estate he wails.
Nor wails in vain: some here and there,
The well-disposed and good, their pennies give.

No more will his solemn tones be heard in the land: 'Lighten our darkness, O Lord!' No more will his cold fingers move over the rusty pages of raised letters. Yes; Bartimæus will have gone—and gone to that limbo from whence there is no return. So it will be even with other landmarks more stable than blind beggars, for which we Cockneys, loving our London well, entertain a warm regard. The flowing tide of civilisation will surely overwhelm them.

It is generally unwise to prophesy, but I have based the above pathetic picture upon some remarks which fell from the lips of Miss Greene, the well-known authority on the education of the blind, and the superintendent of the blind children who are taught in our Board schools.

In years to come she believes the training which these little ones are now getting will make them ashamed to accept alms. The spirit of independence is carefully fostered in every little bosom. Teachers are never weary of painting the virtues of self-reliance in the brightest colours. They themselves are blind; they themselves are living examples of that power of work which has secured for them cheerful hearts, busy lives full of usefulness, an income small indeed, but sufficient for all their wants. Sad to think of must be the lot of the blind one who yields to blank despair; awful to contemplate the long years of dependence upon the charity of others. 'Work to live,' 'Work to forget,' such are the texts for many a lesson. I am sorry to have to say that there are not a few fathers and mothers who do not spurn to trade upon the calamity of their offspring. You will sometimes find a blind child singing in a public-house. Beer maketh the heart very tender. By chance you may encounter a blind child down in the poor quarters, where oddly enough pence are most plentiful, singing sweetly on

a barrow, or attached to an organ. What more moving picture does London present? Again, in summer months, such are often to be seen at the sea-side resorts, and never fail to gather an ample crop of coppers. It is with such children as these that difficulties abound. Once let them taste the fierce joys of publicity, once let their ears become attuned to the soft voice of sympathy, and they are Charity's Children for ever. The merest toddler soon discovers that blindness is Capital upon which the interest is large if invested in proper directions. It is thus, of course, that blind Bartimæi are manufactured.

But Miss Greene assures me that even the poorest parents, to whom much may be forgiven, are now awaking to the fact that Education and Board schools will provide a better and more certain future than public-houses, than peripatetic barrows, than the most musical organs, than Charity. In these enlightened days the Board stretches out its many arms, groping into the darkest corners, and carries off the little blind ones into school—that is to say, into comparative light. The Board takes care of them until they are sixteen. The Board will even clothe and feed them in case of the direst necessity. They may become teachers some fine day or other; they may become organists, pianists, piano tuners—but there, I had best begin

at the beginning. For the present it is sufficient to repeat Miss Greene's remark that the blind children of the poor can and must earn their own livings.

And now I will just introduce you to a few of her charges; to their future prospects:—to the more serious business of life we will return presently.

Imagine a score of children whose ages range from three to ten seated at their desks, having before them books with raised letters which they are following with their fingers. Most of them seem to be but thinly clad, and boots are none too stout. In some cases their eyes are open, though too obviously diseased; in others they are closed, or covered with shades. The sombre murky grey of a London winter afternoon seems to accentuate the tragedy of it all.

Miss Greene smiles, though. The blind are not so unhappy, she says. The teacher smiles too, though blind herself. Nay, even the children smile, and I was surprised to see how their faces lighted up at the prospect of a little excitement. It was but a lesson in general knowledge which was given there and then for my benefit. Here it is, rendered in a free and easy way. The answers paint a picture of their lives which requires no artificial embellishment from me. Their homes, their pains,

their pleasures are placed before you in all their simplicity in the following report.

‘There is a big building—oh! so big—in a wide street near here. Can you tell me what it is?’ began the teacher, Miss Scott.

‘A Himfirmary, Miss,’ cried nearly all the children.

‘No, not an Infirmary. Now, what is it? Try again.’

‘Please, Miss, I knows,’ gasped one of the pupils. ‘A ’Orspital, Miss.’

‘Quite right,’ laughed the teacher, turning her head to me. ‘They all know *that* place, you hear.’

But ere she had well finished the remark a little girl, frail and feeble in appearance, who had hitherto observed a melancholy silence in the dimmest corner, exclaimed *à propos* of no direct question, mind you: ‘*I* was in a ’Orspital. For nine months. In the EYE ward,’ she went on in a sort of proud soliloquy. I fancy she had been dozing until the familiar sound of the word ‘Hospital’ had aroused her.

‘Well, they were kind to you, dear? Weren’t they?’

A dozen tiny heads turned in the direction of the child, awaiting her answer with painful anxiety.

‘Oh, yes, Miss. I liked it very much. Lots

o' grub, and so warm.' And she rubbed her hands with a sort of mournful pleasure at the memory.

'But you would rather be at home, I am sure. Wouldn't you?'

There was no answer. The child hung down her head and was silent. Home was, perhaps, a painful subject, so we passed to other matters.

'Who can tell me what trees are?' asked the teacher.

Somebody said 'Wood.'

'And when they are large and there are lots of them, what are they called?'

'A forest, Miss,' said several.

'And what forest do we all know?'

There was a great cry of 'EPPING.'

'Yes. And now who can tell me what the sea-shore is?'

'Where you go to bathe,' was the logical answer.

'But where does the shore lie?'

'Near the water.'

'But you mustn't go in deep, must you, or?—'

'You'd be drowned.'

'Who knows what drowning is?'

'Gettin' full of water, and you can't breathe.'

At that moment a little boy shouted in a most unseemly manner, quite regardless of answers and

questions, 'Please, Miss, father's going to take me—to dig, Miss!'

Then not to be outdone—for even amongst the little blind ones there is a keen spirit of emulation—yet another roared, 'An' I've been to the water, I have.'

'Where, where?' we all ask.

'The Canal Bridge,' was the triumphant reply.

Here was an anti-climax indeed. The statement was received with a good deal of laughter, for some of the children had seen the above-mentioned canal at some early period of their lives before their sight had gone, and were much tickled at the idea of canal water being delectable. However, in order to cover the shame of this forward young person, who was so anxious to show his knowledge—he was much abashed, for even the blind little ones have their feelings amply developed—the subject was immediately changed. We began to discuss the absorbing question of personal adornment, which elicited one or two curious facts.

'Can any of you tell me what ornaments are?' said the teacher.

'Things you wear,' came the answer, very readily.

'Such as——'

'Ear-rings,' ventured one, a girl, of course.

'Clocks,' said another.

‘No—come—not clocks—WATCHES—like mine—that go—“tick-tick.”’ But the children were evidently less familiar with watches than the larger time-pieces.

‘We have *two* clocks,’ said one.

‘And what are clocks for?’ asked the teacher, little anticipating the revelations that were coming.

‘To PAWN, Miss.’

Hush! We will pass over the awkward pause which now ensued, proceed at once, or, rather, go back to the dark ages, summon up the Ancient Britons into this dim school-room, in the dusk of this wintry afternoon.

‘When the Ancient Britons died what did they put in their graves?’

‘Spears, Miss.’

‘Why?’

‘Becos they thought they could use them.’

‘They couldn’t, could they?’

‘No, Miss.’

‘What did the Ancient Britons think there was in Heaven?’

‘Bears, bulls, and wolves, Miss.’

‘And they thought the spears would kill them, and what did they call Heaven?’

‘The Happy Hunting Grounds.’

‘Did the Ancient Britons have any clergymen?’

‘Yes, Miss. The Druids.’

‘What did the Druids do?’

‘Made sacrifices.’

‘What do you mean by a sacrifice?’

‘Burnt ’em.’

‘Hanged ’em.’

‘*Biled ’em in a saucepan.*’

} Chorus.

‘We don’t make sacrifices, do we?’

‘No, Miss. We’re Christians.’

‘We go to churches, don’t we?’

‘Yes, Miss.’

‘All of us?’

‘No, Miss, *I* go to the Wesleyan Chapel.’

Then one boy ejaculated breathlessly: ‘I go to chapel, too.’ He insisted upon being heard. ‘*And they gives me bread and jam and cawfee!*’

‘But we don’t go to chapels and churches for bread and jam, do we?’ said the teacher, very much shocked.

‘Oh! no, Miss. We go to worship Gawd.’

Then came a small voice out of the dusk: ‘I go to *tea-meetings*.’ The remark partook rather of the nature of a soliloquy, so no notice was taken of it, and the teacher asked what happened to people who did wrong.

There was no doubt whatever about the answer to this question.

‘Send for the perlice,’ the class said.

After a cheerful little sermon, the teacher deigned to return to the 'perlice,' and asked what their duties were. The idea was that they took everybody who did wrong to the magistrate, and if they were guilty that that awful person gave it to them very hot indeed. One very emphatic boy said he always '*anged* 'em. This error was soon cleared up by others with a wider knowledge of the law and its powers, and we were duly informed it was often a 'case of 'seven shillins and costs,' or 'seven days without the option of a fine.'

I fear that even tiny blind boys are not entirely without guile. During the hard winter months the teacher sometimes gives a breakfast out of her own thinly-lined pockets. One morning, a certain youth of five, thinly clad, and badly shod, came to school late, excusing himself on the ground that he had had no breakfast. The teacher gave him some bread and coffee, and sent for his father, a burly coal-heaver, whom she began to abuse with some vehemence.

'I give 'im 'is grub, Miss, I swear I did,' said the man, rather angrily. 'Bring the boy face to face wi' me, and ask him.'

The boy was accordingly brought, and at last, after some cross-examination, admitted that his parent had indeed told the truth.

'Please, Miss,' he sobbed, 'I know'd if I said I'd

had no grub you'd let me off for bein' late, Miss. And I know'd I'd get anofer brekfass, Miss.'

Surely such refreshing candour, though, deserved to escape punishment. It did.

What a delightful lesson Miss Scott has given us!

*DOT LITERATURE AND QUEER
ARITHMETIC*

THE blind children have just assembled after the Christmas holidays, and are very frolicsome. They are still thinking of the glorious feasts they have had, and tell in shrill choruses of monster turkeys, savoury geese, splendid puddings. Blind they may be, but their palates are remarkably sensitive. In the very school itself they had a Christmas tree, and with unction they describe the drums, trumpets, dolls, lanterns, guns, swords, sweets, which hung from its many branches. There it was, standing forlorn and solitary in the corner of a dark cupboard, shorn of its glories, like no arboricultural specimen that I have ever seen, being merely a thin pole, stuck in the middle of a circular wooden platter, with numerous arms projecting from it, which were none other than the branches. But it was a beautiful tree, nevertheless, in the estimation of the class, though it *had* been grown by a carpenter. Was it not beautifully illuminated? Those who could discern shadows, a

ray of sunshine, the glow of the fire, had *seen* the twinkling lights, and had spread the news. And what fruit it bore ! Better than apples, or oranges, or berries—toy fruit, as I have told you, in prodigal abundance. Even blind children have now many little pleasures, which education increases a thousandfold.

Nowadays parents gladly send their blind ones to school—even from long distances. In the cheerful room, governed by the kind and patient mistress, most of them soon wake from the dreadful lethargy which surely seizes those who stay at home and mope. It may take a year or two, but, except in very bad cases, which are at last dismissed as hopeless, the sharp contact with the world soon arouses a desire to excel in their little bosoms. Laugh not at the small ambitions which are thus excited—at friendly rivalries ; rather be very tender towards them. Lowly, indeed, are the heights—mere ant-hills of fame : the embroidery of a sampler, the manufacture of a fragile basket, the weaving of a mat, the stringing of a necklace, the knitting of a bag—but never forget that each of them has been won by efforts which might unnerve a Hercules.

There are shops in London—I am thinking of one in Tottenham Court Road—where articles made by the blind are sold. You will see in the windows

chairs, baskets, mats, brushes of all sorts and conditions, from the shaving brush to the housemaid's broom. It is by the manufacture of these useful wares that most of the working blind in London live. The Board School for the Blind, besides the usual routine, teaches the rudiments of these trades, and thus equips them for the future when they must depend upon their own efforts for a livelihood. Even amongst the blind the fittest are chosen—those who are best equipped mentally and physically—for, as is the case with us fortunate sighted ones, the supply is always greater than the demand. But as years have rolled on, and the system has become slowly improved, fresh fields for employment have been opened up by the untiring efforts of Miss Greene and her friends. In the various schools there are now some hundred and thirty-six blind children, in each of whom the visitor soon sees, if he stays long enough amongst them, that a warm personal interest is taken. Even Miss Greene, dropping in here and there, calls most of them by their names, Christian and surname; and the individual teachers know their histories, their families, and have acquired a profound knowledge of their characters. Thus, when the rudiments have been painfully acquired, it is easy to know in what direction a particular pupil's abilities lie. If he or she is a good all-round scholar, a good

arithmetician, cunning in the making of fabrics, and, generally speaking, accomplished in the arts of the blind, then he or she is sent to the Normal College at Norwood. Here an endless vista of possibilities is opened out. He or she may become a teacher, and thus ensure a very respectable and a very useful future. He or she may become a musician, a singer, a business man or woman. But I have no space to describe the truly admirable work which is being done under Dr. Campbell in this famous institution. It is enough to say that the college is the goal for which the fittest of the Board's blind children are making. Not many, though, reach it, and for these there is an institution at Southsea where many trades are taught; several others of a similiar description in other parts of the country; and St. George's, Southwark, where some two hundred poor blind are at work. Long and painful, though, are the stages by which these places are approached, and it is with these that the Board school proper has to do.

It is ten A.M., and some dozen boys and girls are sitting at their desks, intent on as many ponderous volumes, over whose pages their little fingers move with extraordinary facility. Each is as big as a family Bible, and yet a page only holds a few sentences. A sighted teacher once sent a polite message up to Miss Butler, the blind teacher,

begging for the loan of one of her Bibles. 'My compliments,' said Miss Butler, 'and say that one of our Bibles would fill a room.' This little story gives you in a few words an idea of one of the chief difficulties of the blind—namely, the bulk of their books. And even in the matter of the Bible, many words are abolished and signs are plentifully used for common phrases. However, it becomes merely a common matter of adaptation, in which process every living creature is always engaged. The dumb can speak without a tongue. The man without arms paints with a brush between his teeth. So the blind soon learn to read with pleasure. Well, those big lesson-books which look so formidable are only common third standard Star Readers, filled with interesting extracts from all sorts of authors. First we have a bit from the classics, then a nursery rhyme, then a few lines from Macaulay, then a verse from Tennyson, then a scrap of natural history—all read off with an easy fluency which startles the sighted reader. But this literature in dots is really not so difficult as it looks. To the eye the letters look Hebraic or Chinese, but they are but the commonest everyday A's, B's, and C's. Just make a pin-prick on a bit of paper, and you have a blind boy's 'A'—as one little fellow told me, adding the familiar explanation that he was an Archer who shot at a Frog. You see,

there's really little difference between us. Having made your pin-prick, turn the paper on the other side, shut your eyes, and place your fingers lightly upon it. You will just detect the raised surface, and this will be the right side of the page—that is, the print side, so to speak. Such is the beginning of DOT LITERATURE. You have only to combine the dots, vertically, horizontally, with dots placed now to right, now to left, and you have the whole alphabet. Here is a box full of alphabets, none of your ephemeral paper alphabets, but pierced on a small brass tablet, from which each one picks out the signs. Many a bitter tear, I wot, has been shed upon these humble instruments of learning. Is it fancy? Can that bit of verdigris green be dried salt? Tears from which the moisture has evaporated? I am not *quite* sure.

This, I may say, is called the Braille system, Braille being an ingenious Frenchman who invented Dot Literature, or adapted it, I suppose, from existing systems.

The next time you see an old blind Bartimæus reading his Bible at the street corner, just drop a penny in his tin box, and ask him to let you look at his book. You will probably find that his letters are *lines*, and not *dots*. That is the Moon system. He can read well enough with these raised lines,

but ask him to write, and he will tell you that it is impossible. It was in order to combine the two arts that the Dots came into general vogue. Let us put up the big Readers, and have a writing exercise. 'Get out the pens, please,' says Miss Butler—she always says '*please*,' mind you. So Alice, a tall, slim creature, quite blind, gets up from the back of the class (*she* is *dux*, and is going to the College before long) and finds her way to the cupboard in the corner quite easily, and distributes the *pens*. What curious things they are, to be sure! You and I would call them prickers. Each is but a stout needle stuck in a rounded stump of wood. Everyone having got a pen, Alice now hands round the writing materials. These are fully as remarkable in their way as the pens. Within a smooth brass tablet is fitted a sheet of paper. The regularity which is so desirable in manuscripts, whether epistolary or mere school exercises, is secured by a brass rule which is moved by the pupil from the top of this curious slate downwards, as the writing is done. This rule is perforated into oblong holes, each of which takes the letter, or the short word as it is formed by the pricker. Thus, order is exactly maintained, both in the straightness of the lines and the spacing of the letters, and, laborious though the process appears to us, the blind children accept it

as readily as the sighted children do the ruled exercise book and the common pen and ink.

I must say that the arithmetic lesson nearly maddened me. But I saw some very difficult problems in compound division, compound multiplication—with fractions! with decimals!—done in a twinkling. And how is it done? On metal tablets again, of zinc, perforated with a gross or so of holes. But these holes are very cunningly made. If you took up an arithmetic board for the first time, you would think the holes were common round ones, but they are really true octagonals. It is into these that the pupils fit tiny bits of metal, like common type, such as is used by printers to set up these very words. I cannot describe them better. It is the position given to these in the holes which yields us the numerical value. If you can fancy each hole to be a mariner's compass, divided into eight divisions—north, south, east, west, north-east, north-west, south-east, south-west—you will easily understand what infinite combinations and mutations become possible. Yet, maddening as the handling of these types may seem to you and me, I assure you it soon becomes a very simple matter with the blind, whose sense of touch is so exquisitely fine.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic—you now know how they are acquired, and the children

go into the nursery to play, which they do with surprising spirits and vigour. Pity them if you will, but they enjoy life—AT SCHOOL !

Miss Greene and I now hurry down from the Brecknock regions, of which I have been speaking, into the depths of the town again—down into Holborn. In a little street, just off that roaring thoroughfare, lies another blind school, where the children are dining (I am glad to say) on this very cold and unpleasant day. Some sit on the hearth-rug—made by themselves—before the roaring fire ; others, having done dinner, are playing at various games ; a few are talking, and I am introduced to Mrs. Grimmett, another blind teacher, who evidently takes the warmest interest in her charges. I am particularly introduced to the Museum, in which are stored away all manner of articles for teaching. There is the life-like elephant, with the india-rubber trunk and the bone tusks, which is passed round from one to the other during the lesson on natural history. There is the tiger, too, who growls when you pull a string, admirably shaped, and wearing a beautiful striped coat. There is a camel with humps accurately delineated, who also roars, in tones strangely resembling tiger talk. And a cow. They all know now where the milk comes from. She ‘moos’ most musically—by a little bit of string. Would that I had space to give

you a full and faithful description of one of these very amusing (and just a little pathetic) lessons! These models had only recently arrived, and the blind boys and girls were very full of them. They are certainly more interesting than the pots full of seed, or minerals—salt, for instance—which are also passed round from hand to hand when the object lesson is called. In that fascinating museum I saw also a bird's nest, eggs, acorns, grains of wheat, shells, bits of coral, stones, shells, and many, many objects which *we* know so well by sight; which they only know by TOUCH. But by touch the imagination is stirred, and thus the blind boys and girls conjure up many a delightful picture to illuminate the dark depths within. So I am assured by those who know. What a kindly magician is Fancy! Is there her like in sighted Fairyland? It may be another world than ours that they see; full of strange colours—a sun of vivid green, a sea of unearthly yellow, a moon of gold—but what matters it, if they find consolation! Nay, perhaps they are happier in the dark than us who see the light!

THE LITTLE JEWS IN GRAVEL LANE

It is Friday, about noon; and strange are the sights which may be seen in Gravel Lane, down Houndsditch way. Do you know that quarter of our marvellous capital? Here is the most famous old clo' market in the world; hither come old clo' from all points of the compass; in those dark, mysterious precincts are clo' even manufactured and sold for old, though they are new. Devious, I fancy, are the ways of these children of the East; cunning of barter; acute of wit; with fingers like conjurors'; and tongues which never weary. Let him beware who buys old clo', let him look well as the garment is made to flit swiftly before his eyes, turned and twisted this way and that, as though it were, indeed, endowed with life. And boots, too, and china, and jewels, and all manner of merchandise. Let the buyer beware! Here, down Houndsditch way, too, are Dutchmen from Amsterdam, lapidaries, polishers of diamonds. Here, too, are many Poles, many Germans—Jews

all of them. Many a strange colony is hidden behind the great wholesale emporia which meet the eye of those whose business takes them into that odd street we call Houndsditch—the narrow link between Bishopsgate and Aldgate. But even he who penetrates not into the twisting alleys and dim courts, catches a glimpse of the famous clo' market itself, of innumerable shops stuffed full of clo' of every variety, of grim warehouses choking with toys, jewels, sponges, stationery, and most miscellaneous merchandise.

The children of this strange quarter are now taking a hasty meal in the playground of the school in Gravel Lane, at high noon, Friday. There are hundreds of them, girls and infants, attended by mothers and sisters, by grandmothers and kindly relatives, who have been crowding in for the last quarter of an hour with bags and baskets, bread and cakes, and fish and meats; with mugs and jugs full of steaming tea and coffee. It is an amazing banquet which is in progress as one looks down upon it from the steps. But the Sabbath of the Jews is at hand; at two o'clock the children of the quarter go home; this is but a brief interval for lunch, and none may go beyond the walls.

Yes, they are nearly all little Jews and Jewesses—by many a sign one can see it—the beautiful liquid eyes, the raven hair, the curved nose, the

vivid bits of colour, the humble finery. Amongst them, though, are not a few Christians, though only the expert can distinguish between the races with certainty. Here, for instance, is a dainty little creature, with a head of lovely golden locks, whom you would swear was of Western origin. These charms are enhanced by a hood of fur, a frock of blue, a richly-embroidered jacket, and a pair of beautifully-worked little gaiters. Ah! by those who may know her, perhaps. Yes—she is the daughter of a clo' man close by. How they care for their children, these Jewish people! Why, the very boots are not as Christian boots. We must not forget, though, that we are in Houndsditch—this *sotto voce*—where clo' are cheap. No, no—but there are other signs than clo'—the infinite solicitude of some of these unwieldy mothers of the quarter, displayed in a hundred and one tender little ways.

‘Even that creature with the bloated face, half-hidden in a shawl of vivid yellow?’ I say to Miss Myers—the mistress of nine hundred little ones who come so eagerly to Gravel Lane. She is standing by my side watching her flock. ‘Do you see her?’ ‘A drunken virago—she’s no Jewess,’ cries Miss Myers, with not a little indignation. ‘No—no. Ah! often have I had to reproach her. “Why do you drink?” I ask. “Because my

husband throws the plates and dishes at me.” “And I don’t wonder, if he comes home and finds you drunk.” That is all she gets from Miss Myers, who, though most kindly and sympathetic, has her stern moments, I am sure. Thus, in strange circle, does the old woman revolve—she drinks because her husband throws the pottery at her *because* she drinks. Perplexing maze, indeed!

It is during the brief twenty minutes allowed for refection that Miss Myers talks freely of her charges and their parents. Poor, most of them are, but profoundly grateful for the education which their adopted country provides for them; polyglotted, gathered largely from the oppressed races of Europe, learning English with amazing ease; mentally most alert; eager for learning; never absent from school, unless illness is the cause. Not long ago a little girl was hurrying along the street with a vessel containing paraffin oil. She slipped and fell, and some of the paraffin was spilt over her dress. On going home she hastened to the fire to dry it, and was ablaze in a moment. When they took her to the hospital her first question was: ‘Shall I lose my medal for good attendance?’ Alas! she did. For the laws of Board schools are necessarily those of the Medes and Persians. So fond are they of learning that many go to the Rabbi to be instructed in Hebrew

in the early morning before they come to school. At home, too, many of them hear nothing but Yiddish, Dutch, German, or some strange commingling of sounds. Here, in the playground, they speak the English—with not a little raciness. Jew child and Christian play hand in hand together. There, at this moment, is Jessie Jones dancing a fandango with Rachel Israel; there—Leah Cohen, Rebekah Cohen, Esther Solomon, are being chased round and round by one Ossendrifer. Ossendrifer! — Markowitch, Wineberg, Schiff, Chifkoski, Eckstein, Golboski—surely we are in Babel again. They humanise our English, these strange, wandering races, says Miss Myers—and who can speak with greater authority? This lady is the kindly mother of them all, mingling on easy terms with a thousand families, the friend of all, the adviser, the welcome guest at weddings, funerals, feasts, many quaint ceremonials.

It is difficult to believe that in an hour or two the coming of the Sabbath will be celebrated in the fetid garrets to which many of these children will fly when the clock strikes two. Yes—as it was in the beginning, so it is to-day, in the midst of this roaring, seething city. The mother will have soaked a halfpennyworth of raisins in water, and made the wine. A strip of a sheet may serve in place of fine linen, but it will be spread over the

table, which may itself be but a box. The bread is covered over as prescribed by the Jewish law, though it be but a crust beneath a rag. The candles will be duly lighted, though they be but a farthing dip cut in twain. Ancient, mysterious race!—hath some Djin, then, suddenly swept us through space and dropped us into the Far East all in one swift second? Can such things be in Houndsditch? The wheedling Jew who crieth old clo' round the town, who sweats over our garments, who selleth pencils, oranges, strange merchandise, who purchaseth old bottles, who baffles us Christians by his soft tongue and calculating brain—can it be that in a few hours he and his family will greet the coming of the Sabbath in solemn conclave?

‘It is so,’ murmurs Miss Myers.

Picture them.

The candles are alight, the door is closed. The head of the family takes up the holy book and readeth in Hebrew:

Three things a man must say to his household on Sabbath ere toward dusk: Have ye separated the tithe? Have ye made the Erab? Kindle the Sabbath lamp.

And it was evening and it was morning—the sixth day.

And the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their host. And on the seventh day God had finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the

seventh day, and he hallowed it, because he rested thereon from all his work which God had created and made.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine.

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments and hast taken pleasure in us, and in love and favour hast given us thy holy Sabbath as an inheritance, a memorial of the creation. . . .

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth.

God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh—to the boys.

God make thee as Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, and Leah—to the girls.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord turn his face unto thee, and give thee peace.

Then the raisin wine is passed round, salutations follow, and the real meal begins—if there is one.

Can such things be in Houndsditch? Thus is the family knit together. ‘How wise were the old Rabbis!’ exclaims Miss Myers.

But the bell rings, and the little Jews and Jewesses come marching up the steps on their way to work again. It is very pretty to see the looks of deep affection which many of these dark-eyed little creatures cast up at their mistress. They touch her hand or her garments, nearly every one of them—such a lingering, loving touch it is, which is very affecting to see. And a word at once brings up a smile; eyes laugh, white teeth glisten. These little

creatures come of a high-strung, passionate, emotional race.

Miss Myers seems to rule her little kingdom by a nod, a look, a word. 'You are a coward, Esther Golboski,' I heard her say to a beautiful little Polish girl—a pouting, rebellious mite—who had been rude to a new teacher. 'You are a coward.' And Esther burst into a fit of hysterical tears, sobbed out her sorrow, clung to the hem of the mistress's garment, and was at last taken back into her good graces. 'It is not talent which I applaud,' says she. 'It is effort, it is self-denial, *unselfishness*.' By many a good scheme does this good and faithful servant inculcate these great qualities into the minds of her little polyglots. Fortunate they are to come under the influence of such a one. There is an Amiability prize, which is given by the school to the kindest girl in the school—she who has been most conspicuous in helping others during the year. A whole year! imagine the amiability, the goodness of a child who has helped others for three hundred and sixty-five long days, and whose unconscious efforts have been so notable that a whole school is agreed upon her merits. Yes; the matter is decided by ballot. There is a bank with ninety solid pounds in it—and yet the Jews are by no means thrifty. If public-houses depended upon them for their custom they would soon be ruined. But if they do

not drink, they EAT. There is a Social Club to encourage a love of books—they read Ruskin and Kingsley, and many a good author; they dance; they play; they discuss; they argue. They have collected twenty pounds for the Indian Famine Fund in this poor school in Gravel Lane—the children of these wandering tribes who have suffered pangs themselves.

And yet, despite their many quaint ways, their high-strung natures, these little Jewesses are very human. It is the custom to vary a hard morning's work with a *vivâ-voce* lesson in general knowledge, and at one of these friendly discussions I was allowed to be present. It ranged from Crete and Ultimatums to babies and the housewife's arts; from one to the other the adroit teacher moved with admirable skill. The meaning of autonomy we arrived at from the penny-in-the-slot machines which sell you sweetstuff and take your money without human intervention; an impression that babies had no back-bones was quickly removed; the whole art of stewing was highly commended because meat shrunk not in the process; the beauties of cleanliness were pointed out by many a pupil. Nevertheless some remarkable facts are brought to light in the course of a few months of such discussion. Strange and devious are the workings of the infantile mind, whether Jew or Christian.

This same teacher, Miss Myers, was kind enough to give me a few of those peculiar statements which have appeared from time to time in the otherwise fugitive essays of the backward ones, or maybe they are only eccentrics :

The Turkeys are killing hundreds of the Europeans.

Carlyle was a man that Mr. John Morley made a speech about.

The Pyramids is a night light. It is wax. It burns so many hours a night.

The title of the head of the Roman Catholic Church is known as Lord Rosebery, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A novel is a kind of book which tells you of loves.

Soap is made up of iron, paper, and lime.

Sir Henry Ponsonby was one of the Scottish Chiefs.

The Armenians were discovered by the English.

The Prime Minister is Mr. Haddon. The Speaker is his friend, who goes to houses.

Tragedy means a cryable play.

The Boers are taking a lot of English people and making them work for them, and won't let the poor men come over to England to see their wives and children.

Lord Rosebery is a great man on betting on horses.

Then here are some replies in answer to this question : ' Who is Henry Irving ? '

Henry Irving is a great singer on theatres.

„ „ is a man who writes poems.

„ „ „ „ is a poem.

„ „ „ „ is the Queen's son.

„ „ „ „ is an Archbishop.

„ „ „ „ is a coal merchant.

„ „ „ „ is a Dutchman.

„ „ is the greatest laughable actor.

„ „ keeps a sweet shop in New Street.

Oddly enough, an Irving does sell coals and sweets in this neighbourhood.

Here are a few more oddities :

WHAT IS MEANT BY BEING WITHIN EAR-SHOT ?

Ear-shot means when anybody says anything very shocking.

An ear-shot means that something has gone down your ear, and you can't hear.

By being within ear-shot, is that one of our ears is shorter than the other.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE LORD MAYOR'S SHOW ?

When the day comes when the Mayor is going to be a Lord, he has a show with all his friends and relations.

When anyone is Lord Mayor, they have a right to do what they like without asking the Queen, but the Queen must ask leave of them.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM YANKEE ?

A Yankee is a black man.

A Yankee is a animal born in Scotland.

They are very human, these little Jewesses. In room and hall you meet many a sign that they are in the majority in Gravel Lane—though this is a Board school, teaching according to the syllabus. Only during the half-hour or so allotted to religious instruction are the races separated. The Museum tells the story plainly enough. Here is a phylactery—Hebrew scroll, casket, leathern tapes, and all. How goes the verse in Deuteronomy ? ‘And thou

shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.' It had come from Bagdad. And here is a palm from Jerusalem. How goeth the passage in Leviticus? 'And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.' And here is a ram's horn which is blown in the Synagogue on New Year's Day. 'And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation.' And here, again, is the Hebrew scroll—sign of the feast of Lots—to commemorate the escape of the Jews from Haman. Is not the story written in the book of Esther? 'Wherefore they called those days Purim, that these days should be remembered and kept through every generation.' The Museum contains all manner of strange things which have been brought by the children of these wandering races.

At last they rest in Houndsditch.

The bell for prayers is sounding; the tramp of many feet is heard; of many childish voices—and then Home for the Sabbath, in kens and dives down Houndsditch way.

A FRIENDLY WARNING

WITHIN: imagine a school room, in the dim light of a dying day. Seated at a table, which is littered with ledgers and official documents, are a lady and two or three gentlemen.

Without: imagine a dim hall, in which fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, uncles and aunts, aye—and even ancient grandmothers bent with years of ceaseless toil, and a few children—are gathered together. Some hide themselves in dark corners, brooding in silence over their sorrows; others seek oblivion in friendly conversation; now and then the high, hoarse, strident note of fury rises above the general hum.

At the door which leads from hall to council chamber—otherwise the school-room—stands a small group of officials. They are known as visitors; this is the tribunal which gives a friendly warning that the law must be obeyed.

What a network is the great system which has been organised in the cause of free education! In this single quarter some forty officers are daily going

their rounds amongst the people. Each is responsible for three thousand children. From highway into by-way they go; now up into tottering garret; then down into dim dive: ever winding in and out of the appalling maze of street, and court, and twisting alleys which we call London. Patience is the badge they wear—patience which no torrent of foul language can disturb; patience which no mendacity can baffle. The sights they see, the sounds they hear, the hideous things which they drag into the light of day, it is not within the scope of these sketches to describe. It is enough to say that these visitors are the fishermen who are ever casting their nets in the muddy waters, fishing for little children; and so minute are the meshes that few escape them in the end. Every year each takes a census in his area, in which even the newborn babe is included. Thus is authority armed; thus does it become endowed with the eyes of Argus. The boy or girl who stays away from school is reported by the master to the visitor; the visitor duly pays his call at the home of the absentee, and seeks the reason why. And thus, in a few words, does this marvellous organisation move. But, despite of calls, maybe no heed is paid to the visitor. It is then that the tribunal sends forth its edict, and strange groups assemble in halls of schools.

Without, one voice, hoarse with passion, now

fills the room, though the door is closed. 'Let us take him first,' say the chairman and the superintendent of visitors with one voice; and in flies Mr. Pether, eyes aflame, nostrils dilated, every muscle of him quivering with rage. He strides up to the table as though he were about to charge it; he glances furiously at the visitors, he shifts his gaze to the tribunal, and then begins a loud tirade.

'Take a chair, Mr. Pether,' says the chairman, blandly.

'No, I'll stand,' cries he.

'Very well,' says the chairman, in such conciliatory tones as to raise fresh fires.

'Yes, I will,' continues Mr. Pether, who now rests his hands on the table, and hurls vocal defiance at everyone. He is a man of thirty-five, and pretty stalwart, with a little bristly black moustache, and is evidently hot from his work to judge by the apron he is wearing. A carpenter I think he is, and I dare say a decent enough fellow but for his terrible temper.

'Come, Mr. Pether, control yourself.'

'I'll take good care I don't. What do a lot of old washerwomen like you mean by saying I don't send my girl to school? Eh? What's that? Not bin for four weeks! Well, didn't I tell *'im* (indicating visitor in charge of the case) she was ill? Do you mean to say she ain't a good girl?

Why—look at *them*’—here Mr. Pether tears open a brown paper parcel, and flings it on the table. ‘What are *them*? Oh! you know what *them* is if you know nothink else! Good attendance medals. Would she have got *them* if she hadn’t bin a good girl? Eh?’ The room rang again. ‘I’ll tell you what—you’re a lot of old women—only fit to keep a laundry—and that’s my opinion of *you*. Flat. Say my children’s not good children! Why—what’s *them*?’ Here Mr. Pether bursts another parcel asunder and displays half a dozen prizes.

‘But we’re not talking of your family, Mr. Pether—it is your girl Emily. You say she’s been ill for three weeks—and the officer has seen her playing in the street!’

‘Oh! he did, did ’e? He did, did ’e? Well, I say he didn’t—and my word’s as good as ’is, ain’t it?’—looking daggers at the visitor. ‘He thinks ’isself mighty clever, don’t ’e? Ain’t I ’er father? I am, am I? Thank you for nothink, then, and I’ll tell you straight—Emily Pether don’t come to school till I let ’er—a magistrate! That for your magistrates!’ (Thumps the table.) ‘I tell you she’s a better skollerd than any of you—*you old washerwomen*.’

No mere words can convey the mocking contempt which the irate and impulsive Mr. Pether threw into this last speech. The thought that

anyone should dare to trifle with the rights of a true-born Briton completely carried him away. He was received with the utmost friendliness, and a word would probably have settled the matter.

He received the warning—still friendly, though stern—with heaving bosom; his fingers refused to tie up the books and medals; and off he marched—snorting, and using very strong language.

At last the fearful echoes died away, the tribunal breathed again, and a toil-worn, heavy-eyed, unshaven man of fifty, with face unwashed, came humbly in.

‘Take a chair, Mr. Borley, will you?’

Mr. Borley, playing nervously with his cap, looked up with surprise. Where was he? Who was he? Not Borley, the waterside labourer, who had walked that very morning (so he tells us) for miles to get a job! Him! Borley! asked to take a chair. Him, Borley, whose daily anxiety was the incoming of the tide! Whose eyes were sore with looking for steamers! Whose back only ached because there was no fruit to unload! He hesitated, and then shuffled awkwardly into the chair, (not unlike the old seal used to do at the Zoo) as if he was unaccustomed to such a piece of furniture, though it was but a common article. Why didn’t his boy Tummas Borley go to school? Didn’t he? Well—couldn’t say—indeed he couldn’t.

How should he be responsible for Tummas' actions? He was away at four, in the dark. It was a long way to the wharfes, Mr. School Board. (He addresses the tribunal by this name. Poor dazed, dim Borley! This world's burdens are heavy for thee to bear!) Why didn't his mother look after Tummas? 'Cos his mother were in the 'Orspital with a bad leg. He were very glad as Tummas got 'is schoolin'. Nobody took no trouble with him—Borley—when he were a boy. No. (And he shook his tousled head drearily.) But it were too bad that he should have to come trampin' all the way 'ome 'cos Tummas played the truant. There were a boat expected with the tide, and he'd be lucky if he got back to the waterside afore it. And all along o' Tummas. And then he actually lifts his head and laughs a dismal sort of a laugh. 'But I give 'im a good 'idin', tho', Mr. School Board. I runs in just to tidy myself up a bit, and get a drop o' tea afore I come in 'ere, and there he were in the street.' It was but a transitory gleam of mirth, but for the moment he was quite in good spirits. Then his thoughts evidently wandered away to the river again. Perhaps he saw in his fancy the curling smoke of the boat as she steamed up Citywards, on the bosom of the incoming tide.

Mr. School Board spoke very kindly to him, indeed; expressed a hope that he would be in time

for the boat, and bowing low—it was a trick of humility with him, an hereditary trait, perhaps—he rose, thanked Mr. School Board for its consideration in taking no steps agin him, promised to do his best with Tummas, and disappeared. Poor humble, much-tried Borley !

Mrs. Bagnell took his place—a pinched-up little woman, with an apprehensive eye, a blob of a nose, hair neatly banded over a low forehead, thin, bluish lips, clad in rusty black—bonnet, jacket, gown, gloves and all.

‘Good morning, Mrs. Bagnell.’

‘Good morning, sir.’

‘Why is your son James so irregular at school, Mrs. Bagnell? He used to be a very good boy, you know, a few months ago.’

‘My husban’s bin out o’ work for nigh ten weeks, sir, and James ain’t got no boots.’

‘I’m sorry to hear that. Is there any chance of your husband getting work, do you think?’

‘He’s *got* work, sir.’ Mrs. Bagnell, whose countenance up to this point had led the tribunal to believe that she took a sombre view of life, now got quite cheerful.

‘I’m glad to hear it, Mrs. Bagnell. Very glad.’

‘He’s a very short-tempered man, my husban’ is, sir. That’s how he lost his job—bin in it for

five year, he had.' Mrs. Bagnell was becoming quite confidential.

'Ah!' says the tribunal, not quite equal to the occasion.

'Yes, gentlemen and my lady, beggin' your pardon—but it wern't 'is fault. The foreman grumbled at 'im for nothink at all, but my husban' wouldn't take none of his sauce, and put on his coat, and walked out.'

'Indeed!'

'He's a man of very independent spirit. He wouldn't let the boy stop, nayther—took him away, he did. And there we was for ten weeks, with nothink but a bit o' savin's as I'd got in the teapot to live on. And my husban's bought James a pair o' boots last night, my lady and gentlemen, fourpence off a barrer—it won't run to new 'uns—no—him and the boy's both got jobs again—thank God for it, but not at the old wages—not more than two-thirds.'

'We must pay for our independence, Mrs. Bagnell.'

'Yes, sir, that's true—but my husban's one as can't abide to be trampled on—*good* mornin', my lady—and gentlemen—and thank you kindly—yes—James shall go reg'lar—I give you my word. *Good* mornin'.'

Have you ever watched the house-wrecker at

work with his pick? Hair, beard, face, bosom, arms, clothes—are smothered in the dust of ages. Dust is in every pore of him—in his eyes, in his nostrils, in his throat. He breathes dust, he eats dust, he drinks dust: it mingles with the very sweat that rolls off his stalwart frame: viscous rivulets trickle into his mouth, thence into his body. He drives the pick into the defenceless walls, he rends the rotting timbers, he tears down the rafters—this genius of destruction. Is it surprising, then, that Mr. Sears is in a muddled condition when he walks into the council chamber? He won't sit down because he's in a hurry; besides, he ain't fit if you'll excuse him. Charley ain't goin' to school, ain't he? Well, he didn't know why. He were sent with tothers, all except the three eldest, who was strugglin' to get a bit o' somethink to fill their bellies, if we'd 'scuse 'im for a-sayin' so. Had a dim notion that Charley were sempted (exempted). He were sure he were thirteen. Not thirteen till next November, wern't 'e? No? He must be wrong, then. He's got so many he's mixed 'em up, he supposes. Very sorry. Will speak to his missus when he gets 'ome—and departs, leaving a trail of white dust behind him.

Mrs. Popert, a jovial, well-nourished lady, now plumps herself down on the chair, nods to the tribunal, and produces from a black bag a birth cer-

tificate. Jane Popert is thirteen, she has passed the sixth standard, and Mrs. Popert, her mother, now requires her services.

‘Come now, Mrs. Popert, can’t you let her stay a little longer—till she’s fourteen? She is getting on so well, and the more she knows the better it will be for her. It’s a great pity to put her to work so soon.’ Thus Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Popert had been eying the tribunal with ill-concealed amusement. She remained silent for a full half minute before she answered this appeal, looking with deliberation from one to the other. Then she suddenly tossed back her head, pushed a few troublesome hairs off her brow, and spoke :

‘No—I *can’t let her stay longer.*’ Mrs. Popert was actually mimicking the tribunal. ‘No—I *can’t let her stay longer.*’

Twice she repeated the words.

This was, indeed, a moment of triumph, in which Mrs. Popert gloated with a perfectly indecent pleasure. Long (I cannot help thinking) had she waited for this occasion—Jane Popert’s thirteenth birthday. Many a time (I feel quite sure) had she consulted that bit of blue paper from Somerset House which she flaunted under the noses of the assembled authorities.

And now the time had come at last.

‘No—I can’t let ’er stay longer—it’s time she did a bit for ’erself.’

So the tribunal had no choice but to obey the law themselves, and by this time, no doubt, Jane is sewing button-holes, driving a sewing machine, making ties, umbrellas, cigars, cigarettes, doing a bit for herself, at all events.

What a haunting procession it is that files up one by one to that little table, littered with documents! You have the paper documents, and the human—both are before you.

Here is a poor, sombre, broken man, who once turned a bold front to the world. He is a mechanic, out of work, and his children are in a bad way. He breaks down altogether at some sympathetic remark from one of the tribunal.

‘Don’t look at the black side, Mr. Showbridge.’

‘It’s *all* black side, sir,’ he replies.

Then he stumbles out.

Here is the prolific Mrs. Smith, the mother of thirteen, and a fourteenth (she volunteers the information quite readily) expected before many weeks are over.

‘How many times has Mrs. Smith been here before?’

‘Well, I’ve only bin at the police court once, anyways. And then I paid for it.’

‘Why don’t you send your boy, Anthony, to school, Mrs. Smith?’

‘How should I know? I ain’t seen ’im this three week.’

‘What?’

‘It’s the Gospel truth.’

‘And Rose?’

‘Rose ’as ’ad a bad ’ed.’

‘That’s no reason for her absence.’

‘She’s troubled with a sore throat too. It ain’t safe for ’er to mix with the other children, is it, now? What do you say, lady?’

‘She’s been seen with a skipping rope.’

‘Rose! no she ain’t—that’s Lily—I suppose you’d like me to send ’er? Well—it ’ud be no good if I did. Ever since she had that fall down the school steps in the frosty weather she’s bin so bad with the buzzins in ’er ’ed as the best skoller in the world couldn’t make ’er do ’er sums.’

‘And about Anne? She plays in the street too.’

‘Well—me and the teacher’s been ’avin’ some words about ’er. I won’t let ’er go to Bible lesson.’

‘But she’s only been five times in three weeks. Come—Mrs. Smith—you’ll have to send your children. Unless they go on Monday—a summons.’

Thereupon Mrs. Smith flounces out, tearing passion to tatters.

Fast they come and go—the mother of twins, one of whom is a truant, the other an ambitious scholar; the grandmother, whose hooped shoulders must now bear a new burden—the children of her dying daughter who has been deserted by her husband; applicants for the dunce's certificate given to boy or girl who has made two hundred and fifty attendances at school in five years. What domestic dramas are unfolded in two short hours! What comedies! what tragedies! These are the majority. Here are wives whose haggard faces and worn fingers testify to lifelong efforts. One hears of homes broken up by gambling in the foul dens where the tape clicks from noon till dusk—where the illicit wheel spins round from eve till dawn. One hears stories of drink and improvidence which make the blood curdle. In this quarter they call it Saint Monday, and you may see the women lurching about in gangs, from public-house to public-house. In this quarter, if a child is asked where its mother is the reply comes naturally, 'Gone to pawn.' In this quarter on Saint Monday the mothers do go to pawn, unashamed, carrying the Sunday clothes upon their arms. In this quarter the week-end is one prolonged debauch in thousands of families.

Who knows it better than the visitors ?

It is the duty of these officers to speak to any boy whom they may happen to see in the streets during school hours. One of them met a child of twelve—a boy—and, stopping, said : ‘ You’re Billy Gough, aren’t you ? ’ ‘ Gough !—who are you gettin’ at ? My name’s Bell, my name is. ’ ‘ Your name’s Gough, and you’ll just come along with me. ’ When they got to the school which the boy alleged to be Gough should have been attending, he was confronted with an undoubted Gough—Tommy to wit—who at once cried : ‘ Why—it’s Billy ! ’ Billy, though, regarded him with a cold and staring eye. ‘ Oo am I, d’ye say ? ’ ‘ Billy ! ’ chirruped Tom, quite glad to see his brother after a prolonged separation. ‘ ‘ Oo are you callin’ Billy—I never seen you before—I ain’t got no bruvvers, I ain’t. ’ However, his mother eventually placed the matter of his identity beyond doubt. The incident, trivial though it may be, says much for the artful ways of the youth of this quarter, and throws a little light upon the difficulties of a Board School visitor. Even now the truants evade Mr. Board School by many a wile ; they, too, turn Peters, and deny themselves ; they secrete themselves in drain-pipes ; they play the pirate on canals ; they organise gangs and raids ; they go a-Robinson Crusoeing ; they sleep out of a night ; they pilfer with infinite

cunning. It is not a nice quarter. In the old days, though, the parent was wont to defy the visitor with a whirling axe; even to-day a flower-pot sometimes drops by accident. But, on the whole, visitors say that they are well received. By this time all but the very worst parent admits the value of education. The very worst parent is, indeed, an awful ruffian. One I heard of who not long ago, having lost his wife, distributed his family amongst kindly relatives. All but one—a boy of seven or eight. Him he could not dispose of. What did he do with him? Left him in the street all day—it was winter—and picked him up again at night—whenever he was ready to repair to the common lodging-house in which he had established himself.

He wants more than a friendly warning.

A CALL FROM THE 'COPPER'

IN spite of many requests, polite, persuasive, peremptory, Mrs. Dubbey (say) declines to send her offspring, John Thomas Dubbey, Mary Anne Dubbey, and Albert Edward Dubbey (say) to school. Now and then, it is true, John, aged eleven, who should be in words of four syllables and compound interest, but as a matter of fact still halts at words of two syllables and cannot tell you how many farthings go to the pound, turns up towards the latter end of the week for an odd afternoon. He generally offers as an excuse for his absence—the baby, though (as is now known) Mrs. Dubbey has not added to the population since the appearance of Albert Edward, a sturdy urchin of five. Nevertheless, little John—like his notorious namesake who once ruled Old England—fibs in the most audacious manner, though only an expert in childhood would ever guess that he was veering a hair's breadth from the truth. Yes, it is the baby. If it is not his little bruvver, then it is his aunt's baby. Or if he is confronted with

the fact that his mother's sister is dead, or non-existent, then he will tell you that he has made a mistake, and declare with a perfectly frank expression on his smiling countenance that it is an aunt by the faver's side.

Once he was clean bowled out by his sister Mary Anne, who had vowed with tears in her eyes that *she* also was—'kep' at 'ome nussin' the baby what was that bad with the 'oopin' cough as the pore little thing was not expected to live, he wern't—suffering ag'nies, Miss. It's fair drefful to see 'im.' But in spite of this her muvver—a perfect Spartan in matters of education—had insisted upon her (Mary Anne) putting in the 'hafternoon anyways' at school. It was this incident that led to the discovery of the fact that no such baby existed in the Dubbey family.

But there is literally no end to the inventive powers of Master John Dubbey. Sometimes—his master having sent round to his residence to make inquiries—he has the toothache, and is just going to have the offending molar taken out. Again, after a prolonged absence of a couple of months say—he has been 'in the 'orspital, Barfolomew's, please sir.' There is no evidence of this fact to be procured, and it is generally supposed that the hospital in which poor John has been suffering was no other than the Kentish orchards, where he has

been engaged in the delightful occupation of fruit-picking—and eating. He broke three of his ribs on one occasion, but—strangely enough—was encountered enjoying himself on a canal barge by an acquaintance on the very day when he alleged that the accident had happened.

With Albert Edward it is generally a matter of boots. This is what Mrs. Dubbey says when brought to book concerning her youngest—this or a variant suggested by her marvellous fancy. She is very indignant. 'What! Me send my boy to school without boots? What would the neighbours say, I should like to know? A nice disgrace on the family, my word.' Then, perhaps, she changes ground. 'It 'ud fair break my 'art to see his pore little feet—(gasps a little)—cut to pieces with glass and stones as is lyin' about in our street. Oh! yes, it's a perfect disgrace, I say it, and I mean it. Why didn't I *buy* boots? Buy 'em, you says. Where's the money? Will you give it us? Will the Board school—(with great contempt)—supply us? 'Ritin'! 'rithmatics! What business have they a-interferin' with our fam'lies? Buy boots! It's as much as I can do to fill their pore little mouths, the little dears.'

Then she takes breath.

'Where is Albert Edward? (This in reply to a polite question as to the missing child's where-

abouts.) How do I know where he is? I said I'd kep' 'im from school 'cos he'd no boots, did I? Well—so I did—(here she bursts into hysterical laughter)—and the pore little chap's gone to his grandmother's—to see if she can 'elp us. If I don't send him to school I'll be summonsed, will I? Now, sir (here Mrs. Dubbey weeps copiously), do 'ave a bit o' pity on a 'ard-working woman. I'll do my best, I will—I'll swear it. He shall come on Monday mornin', an' we'll go without our Sunday dinner to buy a pair o' boots for him. I can't send him without, sir, now can I? I arsk you. Yes, sir (brightening up a good deal as the official shows signs of relenting), as sure as my name is Jane Dubbey 'e shall be there punctual, and Mary Anne, too, and John—the three of 'em; and you shan't never have no more trouble with me.'

When the visitor has disappeared, Mrs. Dubbey goes round the corner into the four-ale bar of the Dook o' York, and slakes her thirst.

The above is a free-and-easy version of a story which I heard on good authority. I have only taken a liberty with the family name, being anxious not to bring any disgrace upon it, or to hurt the feelings of the good lady by exposing her to the full glare of publicity. I suppose I should also apologise to all those who bear the name of Dubbey, whose patronymic I have ventured to borrow.

But I am sorry to say that there are many Dubbeyes—take them as types—in the metropolis—mothers who, bred up in black ignorance themselves, cannot see the uses of what Mrs. Dubbey calls 'ritin' and 'rithmatics.' Polite and patient is the schoolmaster ; polite and patient the visitor ; but at last some action is inevitable unless Board schools are to become a laughing-stock.

So, sure enough, after many warnings, many pleadings, the 'copper' calls at last and leaves a bit of blue paper with Mrs. Dubbey. Mrs. Dubbey is 'summonsed' at last.

Let us see what happens.

The grim passage which leads into the Police Court is crowded with men, women, children, and babies ; crime has been dealt with ; it is half-past two o'clock on Friday afternoon—and these people are mostly of the Dubbey class—fathers and mothers who won't send their offspring to school because they don't care about 'ritin' or 'rithmatics.'

There are seventy-two cases to be dealt with. The magistrate is on the bench. Various Board-school visitors are ready to kiss the book. Their chief sits at the solicitors' table with the fatal records before him. The missionary takes notes in a quiet corner. The seamy human panorama slowly unfolds itself.

The very first case was decidedly a Dubbey one.

‘Mrs. Stringer, your boy has not been to school for four months,’ says the magistrate gravely.

Mrs. Stringer bobs to his worship—she wears a bonnet with lovely purple flowers—and then tries to petrify the witness with a glance. ‘Four months, sir! Well, I wasn’t aware it was so long as that, your worship. I don’t believe it.’

‘Four months?’ says the magistrate, turning to the witness.

‘Yes, your worship, four months. He goes to work.’

‘Goes to work, do you say? I’m sure he don’t,’ cries Mrs. Stringer, in blazing wrath. ‘He’s bin in the ’orspital.’

‘Yes,’ says the visitor. ‘Why?’

‘’Cos he ’ad a dreadful accident.’

‘Why?’ persisted the visitor.

‘Why?’ asks Mrs. Stringer, as if trying to remember how it all happened, being so long ago.

‘He went to work, sir, and was hurt by a machine. He’s not thirteen,’ says the visitor, supplying the information.

‘Well, now, Mrs. Stringer, you know well enough that your boy should be at school.’

‘Well, sir, I do send two of ’em.’

‘Sometimes,’ says the visitor, referring to his necessary documents. ‘Two out of six.’

'Well, Mrs. Stringer, I fear you take no interest in your children,' says the magistrate kindly, but seriously.

'No interest!' Mrs. Stringer is up in arms at this. Over and over again she repeats the calumny. 'Ow can you say such a thing? Me! When I goes out to work every day to get 'em nourishments—what they ought to require.'

But I fancy the magistrate was right, for Mrs. Stringer's face was painted a vivid red—with what I am afraid are excessive 'nourishments.' And how voluble! What a tongue! 'Eighteen pence!' she cried, every purple petal on her bonnet trembling. 'Don't you wish you may get it?' And then she stamped out of the court.

Indeed, I wonder that the poor door survived the many hard knocks which it got that afternoon.

'Mrs. Crockett.'

'Good afternoon, sir,' says the lady. 'Good afternoon,' she says again, bowing smilingly to the bench, as if she was here to exchange compliments about the weather.

'Mrs. Crockett——'

'I knows, sir. I told the gentleman,' casting a smirk in the direction of the witness-box, 'all about 'im. 'e won't go unless he's took. I can't do nothing with him, I can't. You can't expec' a

'ard-workin' woman to give up a good situation—cleans a hoffice out, your worship—to take her boy to school, now can you? Who's goin'——'

'Mrs. Crockett, your boy has made fifty-three attendances out of a hundred and fifty-five, and you must get him to school. If you don't you know he is liable to be sent to an Industrial School until he is sixteen. A shilling.'

A sickly smile flits across Mrs. Crockett's face.

Mrs. Culliford appears in her stead.

'Mrs. Culliford, your boy has made twelve attendances out of a hundred and fifteen. What have you to say?'

'Well, sir, I have to keep him at home to nurse the baby.'

'The baby's four years old, sir,' says the visitor.

'And how old's the boy? Twelve. Come, Mrs. Culliford, you know very well that the rate-payers will pay for your "baby" to be looked after, and even taught in the infants' school. And you not only don't send her, but you keep your boy of twelve at home to nurse her. It is absurd.' Fine of a shilling, and Mrs. Culliford departs with a snort.

'Mrs. Crump, your boy is ten, and has only made fifty-eight attendances out of a hundred and twenty-three.'

'Please, sir, I'd no boots to send 'im in.'

Mrs. Crump is too fond of bed, and lies there half the day. No wonder there are no boots. But the magistrate adjourns her case for a month, to see whether she will rise earlier and despatch little Crump to school more frequently.

Then a husband takes her place—one Hawker with a glum and forbidding countenance.

'Mr. Hawker, your boy of eleven has not been to school for two months.'

'He's at work, sir,' says the witness.

'Yes, he is,' admits Hawker, in a fit of candour.

'You are breaking the law, you know,' says the magistrate. 'Besides—looking at it in its lowest light—the value of the boy will be much less when he is fourteen if you don't let him go to school.' But Hawker shook his thick head; he couldn't see it, and was fined half-a-crown. I fancy young Hawker would get a hiding that night to judge by his father's face at this.

'Mrs. Howship. Oh, you've come for her! Very kind of you——'

'Yes, sir; she couldn't come herself. She's just goin' to have another,' says Mrs. Howship's friend, with refreshing frankness.

'Well, can you tell us why Mrs. Howship's boy attends school so irregularly?'

‘She’s kep’ ’im at ’ome cos of the fever, sir.’

‘Has he had the fever?’

‘No, ’e ain’t ’ad it; but Mrs. Howship thought it wasn’t safe to send ’im on account of the other little boys and girls. The ossifers come to burn the beddin’ only on Tuesday, sir.’

‘What, has Mrs. Howship had her bed burnt, then?’

‘No, sir, not Mrs. Howship’s bed; it was Mrs. Howship’s neighbour’s.’

‘Your worship, the fever was in another block of buildings, facing Mrs. Howship’s. There was no case anywhere near them.’ Thus—the visitor.

Mrs. Howship had sent an ingenious friend to represent her, but she was sentenced to pay a fine of two shillings.

‘Mrs. Rickard——’

‘Please, sir, my boy suffers dreadful from the toothache.’ In a perfect torrent the good lady sobbed out the words. ‘Oh! it is true—arsk the ossifer—the gentleman what is in the witness-box—ain’t you seen ’im with his face swolled and wropped up?—aye, many a times—it’s no use him sayin’ he ain’t, your worship. What can I do with a boy like that? Why, when I do send ’im they sends ’im back agin—yes, sir, they does. Why? ’Cos he cries so much with the pain, poor little fellar. Fair hollers! ’Ow can he do ’ritin’ and

sums in that state? It's not only hisself, but he makes sich a noise that the other children can't do their lessons. What! ain't I tellin' the gawspel truth?' (The witness was smiling.)

This providential pause enabled the magistrate to ask a most impertinent question.

'But, Mrs. Rickard, why don't you have the boy's tooth taken out?' he said, softly. 'It will surely hurt him much less now than in a year's time—when it will be bigger or more decayed?'

'Oh! you thinks so,' says Mrs. Rickard, with a very provocative curtesy.

But Mrs. Rickard's impudence was quickly nipped in the bud.

'Half-a-crown,' said the magistrate quietly, as if he wished to break the fact gently.

'Half-a-crown! Well, I'll keep you waitin' for it.'

Then Mrs. Rickard flounced out of the court—and bang went the door. Luckily it swings, or she would certainly have done herself a severe injury.

I may mention here that the money is collected in 'dribs and drabs,' as the saying is.

'Mrs. Ollett'—called, and appeared.

Mrs. Ollett's little girl had had the measles. She was better now, but they—the measles—(plural, I suppose) had left her with bad eyes, and she couldn't see to go to school. They was

mendin', and by Monday Mrs. Ollett was in good hope that she would be able to find her way. Case adjourned for a week.

‘Mrs. Spong.’

Mrs. Spong, a washerwoman, fat and fifty, in a crape bonnet and gray shawl, declares that her girl—whose attendances are sadly irregular—is suffering from a consumption. She has also lumps in her throat which she has given to her two brothers. Mrs. Spong produces from an old paper a ‘sustif-kit’ which only proves that the girl is still within several months of thirteen. The diseases from which she is said to be suffering are proved to be figments of a lively imagination, and Mrs. Spong is dismissed with a little fine of a shilling and a little lecture. ‘You should be more truthful, Mrs. Spong. You are evidently ignorant of the use of schools. Can you read? No! Well, take my advice and send them.’

‘Well, sir,’ said Mrs. Spong mournfully, still keeping it up, ‘I’ll send her on Monday mornin’—if she’s alive, and if I’m alive myself. I’m expectin’ another, your worship.’

Mrs. Spong was then led away by one of the officers of the court, dissolved in tears.

‘Mrs. Brading, why don’t you send your three children to school?’

‘Well, sir, I’ll tell you the truth. Little

Charlie—he tumbled down the steps and broke one of his ribs, and 'ad to go to the 'orspital. I couldn't send 'im in that state, sir, could I?'

Being encouraged by a nod from his worship the poor woman proceeded:

'Then there's Freddy—he's my youngest, sir—on last Lord Mayor's day, sir, he picked up some bad fruit and he's pisened 'isself.'

'Poisoned himself! How was that?'

'Please, sir, it was a apple, and the apple was dipped in some nasty liquid, and it took 'im in the bowels.'

'Well, how long ago was that?'

'In the summer, sir.'

'But summer's gone a long time ago. Come, Mrs. Brading, you don't mean to tell me that Freddy has been ill ever since then.'

'Well, I'm glad to say he's gettin' over it now, sir. I think he'll be able to get back to school on Monday mornin', sir. He's a good little schollard, too, sir, and very fond of his books.'

'Then what about the third? For seventeen weeks he's not been.'

'Oh, Benny! His eyes is very bad, indeed. They break out every year—the blight is very bad in our part——'

The magistrate looks at the witness. The witness declares that the children are perfectly

well. He met them in George's Gardens only the day before, and told them to go to school, which was much warmer and much pleasanter than running about the streets.

'Oh!——' bellows Mrs. Brading, with a mocking laugh on her dirty face.

'Yes, your worship,' says the witness. 'Mrs. Brading has been heard by her neighbours to declare that they shan't go to school, and that she'll defeat the Board. She defies us.'

'I do,' cried Mrs. Brading, arms a-kimbo, a picture of rage, forgetting diplomatic art, 'I do. I'll send 'em to their 'ant in 'Ackney. We'll move, see if we don't.'

'Five shillings!' says the magistrate. Temporary collapse of Mrs. Brading.

And so the race of Dubbeys marched in and out again—amusing, voluble, impudent: the bitter foes of all children.

I have grouped them together.

There is quite another side to the picture—the tragic—when real Famine, gaunt and haggard, steps up into the dock, and sometimes falls at the very feet of Justice.

A QUESTION OF BOOTS

It is quite surprising to see how many boys find their way into the police-courts. There is the wicked boy who steals the rent from his father's pockets or his mother's stocking; there is the reckless truant; there is the little thief with the short-cropped hair, and the cunning foxy face, who picks pockets; there is the fighter, who appears with a pair of black eyes and gory garments; there is the captain and his gang, who have a mortal feud with another captain and another gang; there is the boy (I have this on unimpeachable authority) who actually trains other boys to steal; there is the stupid boy who is lost; there is the boy who, having been disappointed in love, threatens to commit suicide (incredible as it sounds). I have seen him with my own eyes, I have heard with my own ears, from the lips of the witness, how he was just about to throw himself into the dirty cut (that's the canal), when the strong arm of the law held him back. There is his good mother come to take charge of the moon-struck youth (about fourteen), an errand boy.

And now a word about John Wild—the first boy on this long list of difficult subjects, most of whom spurn school, and hold all authority at defiance.

John Wild was in the dock at Worship Street Police-court; James Wild—his father—was crying bitterly in the witness-box, giving evidence against his son in spasms which were awful to behold. Can drama show situation more tragic?

The following are the circumstances:

On the previous night young Wild—a ne'er-do-weel of sixteen, who lived with thieves and the like in common lodging-houses, and never did any honest work, though he was strong and burly—had come to his father and begged for a little food and shelter. Though the family was in a bad way, and had no reason to regard John as one of themselves, he was not turned out. Then this is what happened. In the middle of the night he got up, stole five or six shillings which lay on the mantel-piece, crept out, and was run to earth the next day in a public-house. As he had stolen from his father, so had he thrice robbed other relations. Here, indeed, was one of education's failures. But the worst is yet to come. This poor man, who can scarcely tell the story for emotion, has nine other children and a sick wife, and only had three days' work during the week.

Such are the bare facts. I mention them here

because, happening to be in court at the time, they served to introduce me to the missionary, Mr. Massey, to whose notice the magistrate, Mr. Corser, had recommended this poor father (the boy, I am glad to say, was sent to prison).

And why ?

Because more trouble was hanging over James Wild's devoted head. He was threatened with a summons for not sending his children to school.

I was present at the interview—a most painful one it was—and you will soon understand why it should be mentioned under such a heading as Board-school Studies. Ah ! much more close, much more intimate than you think for, is the connection between Court and School. I have told you of the wicked and vicious Dubbey family, who decline to let their children be educated, even though it costs them not a stiver. Now, by the kindness of Mr. Massey, the missionary, I will try and present to you another phase of the question.

It came out in this interview that James Wild and his family lived in two miserable rooms ; that his wife was ill on the remains of a bed, the best part of it having gone to the pawnbroker's ; that his family (without counting John) numbered nine ; that four of the five shillings were for the rent ; that Wild (a mechanic, he is) had not constant

work, and, above all, that he could not send three of his children to school because they had no boots. Until these facts were elicited it is just possible that some critics might have thought him to be rather a hard-hearted father. No such thing; the man was evidently one of those honest, kindly, easy-going, rather hysterical people, who always seem to be in difficulties, mostly produced by their own excessive good-nature. How he came to have such a son as that low-browed young villain John none can say. A freak of heredity, I suppose.

‘Well,’ said the missionary, ‘come up to this address’—handing him a card—‘and we will see about those boots.’

Wild flushed up as if he was ashamed of accepting this kindly offer, but at length consented to avail himself of it. What else could he do under the circumstances?

‘I suppose boots are one of the great difficulties?’ I said, after Wild had gone.

‘Yes, and some of the most painful cases come to my knowledge through summonses for non-attendance at school. I have seen more than one mother who was summoned for not sending her children to school faint in the Court from sheer hunger.’

I sighed, I suppose, or gave some sign of sorrow, for the missionary went on in tones almost cheerful

‘But I do believe their appearance at the Court has often been the best thing that ever happened to them.’

‘Strange paradox!’

‘But it is the truth. Come with me this afternoon, and you will soon see.’

So I waited in a quiet corner of the Court; watched the unfolding of countless little dramas, squalid, sombre, grotesque; listened to sin, ignorance, misery—pleading, lying; and followed the missionary’s pencil as he noted down here a case and there a case; questioned him whilst the stalwart gaoler marched off with his prisoner to some mysterious chamber without, and returned with another.

Many people shrug their shoulders at the word missionary, but in the police courts he seems to me to be one of Christ’s agents indeed. Day by day, week in and week out, month after month, year after year, he is to be found in those grim precincts, often enough from morn till eve; and even then perhaps his work is only beginning. What tragic histories he hears! What horrible sufferings he witnesses! Crime, of course, is dealt with shortly, sharply, effectively. It is with the consequences of crime that the missionary has to grapple. We—that is, the world—listen to the case (or read the brief report in the papers), the

prisoner is handed over to the gaoler, who claps him into the cell, and later in the day Black Maria takes him to her bosom, and we hear no more of him.

But I do not doubt, for instance, that the missionary will try and ship that wicked boy to sea when he has done penance (in fact, he told me that he should do so); if a culprit leaves a wife and family behind him for six months, he sees what can be done to tide them over the evil time; many a poor home he helps to keep together, even though it be with but a few twopenny sticks; work he finds; he intercedes with employers whose servants have pilfered, or worse; he even takes errant couples to church, and gets the parson to tie the knot for nothing. But there, the gaoler taps him on the shoulder, he closes his book, and we pass into the corridor, lined with police, officials, and prisoners' friends; a seamy lot they are, to be sure.

'I have to see one of the prisoners for a minute or two,' says the missionary, 'and then we will go.'

Up a flight of stone steps we mounted, and passed into a large chamber, dim lit from the skylight above, along each side of which ran a number of seats divided by wooden partitions, something in the manner of the old-fashioned dining taverns.

An oldish woman of the Jane Cakebread order

had expressed a wish to see him. (I may say that Mr. Massey dresses in grey, and wears a red tie, so that his appearance does not frighten these miserable creatures.)

The woman had been found rolling in the road ; her old hat was bespattered with mud ; so was her gown ; so were her hands and face—with a splash of blood ; and all she wished to know, with tears of penitence rolling down her cheeks, was whether the missionary—*could get her a cook's place.*

His next client was a flower-girl, with a very red face and of very powerful build, with a very big hat containing some very big feathers in it, waving and bobbing deliriously. *She* had been found rolling in the road likewise. One drop, as she plaintively remarked, led to another ; but could the missionary get her off this time ? Oh ! she didn't mind paying a fine at all, but was of a very retiring temperament, and wished to avoid publicity, as ' folk did talk so when a woman got a drop too much.'

Indulgence in drink had also brought a third client to this ignominious position, though she frankly admitted, being now quite sober, that she ' give 'em a nice run for it. Oh ! yes—I could run, so I weren't so bad, was I ? I'll take my oath, sir, I'd only 'ad half a pint. I's just buried my baby, and I took a drop to drown my sorrow.' The girl,

for she was not much more, was in a deplorable condition. She had no home. She slept in shelters when she had twopence. 'Oh! my—nice places they is; you've got to be drunk before you can get any sleep there!' she exclaimed. 'Go into a 'ome—no fear; no 'omes for me.' This in reply to a certain suggestion. 'They're worse nor prisons,' she cried, and flounced off.

Well, the missionary gave each such consolation as was possible; took the name and address (a shelter) of the cook; gave some good advice in a genial manner to the flower-girl; took the name and address of the shelter 'where you can't sleep unless you're drunk,' and then said he was ready.

Half an hour's journey brought us to his house, behind which, in a small garden, stood a small building of galvanised iron. 'This,' said he, 'is our depôt, and in a few minutes (looking at his watch) I expect a score of visitors, most of whom, as you will see, have been made known to me through School Board summonses. You ask me about hard cases; just listen to them.'

Then we entered the iron house.

It was piled high with blankets, white and grey; woollen gowns of blue, red, sombre brown; over-gowns and under-gowns, petticoats and mysteries; children's clothing, male and female; long clothes and short clothes; boots and shoes, old and

new, from number sevens to number ones; hats and bonnets for Bethnal Green women and Hoxton women—Bethnalians affect hats, whilst Hoxtonians wouldn't be seen in them, thinking that a bonnet is the only wear; caps for boys, more hats for girls, cloaks for women, pants for men, good stout pants of cloth, moleskin and corduroy; overcoats for men——.

‘You mightn't think that an overcoat could save a whole family from ruin, would you?’ said the missionary, holding out the tails of a respectable second-hand garment for my inspection. ‘No; but so it is; employers are often very critical.’

‘Nor decent gowns like these, now,’ exclaimed the missionary's wife, who had just entered with an armful.

Oh! respectability, what a tyrant thou art! In North, South, East, and West. But how else shall we know a man except by his clothes?

‘But all these articles—where does the money come from?’ I asked, a little bewildered.

‘From the Montagu Williams' Blanket Fund.’

Then I remembered how that bluff but warm-hearted magistrate had one bitter winter appealed to the charitable for money to buy blankets and coals, to be distributed amongst such deserving cases as came under the notice of himself or his

missionary (Mr. Massey), at the Worship Street Police court. The appeal was successful, and Mr. Corser and Mr. Cluer, both kind and sympathetic men themselves (before whom the procession of the sinful, the ignorant, the unfortunate, now file daily), carry on the work—which has nothing to do with the poor box—of this invaluable fund.

‘Warmth, warmth, warmth!’ exclaimed the missionary; ‘boots, boots, boots. Ah! my dear, that’s the man Wild I told you about. Is the parcel ready for him? I’m certain it’s him by the ring.’ It was a poor, feeble tinkle, to be sure.

The missionary was right; it was Wild, who walks along the passage leading to the iron house, shy, furtive, as if afraid of being seen. But when once inside (I looked the other way, and became deeply engaged in a parcel of stockings) he cheered up at the sight of all this warmth. Some kind remark of the missionary’s wife, however, set him crying again, most bitterly; knocks and hard words he could have borne, but sympathy in his troubles quite overcame him. Sob—sob—sob. At last he dried his eyes on one of the blankets; took his parcel, which contained the boots for his children who couldn’t go to school; learnt with emotion that he would hear no more of the summons for non-attendance (for the present); and, having said that he was going to work in the morning,

the clouds rolled by, and he went off with a smile on his face.

So you see how grief may become joy ; how from evil good may arise. A 'call from the copper' may sometimes be a blessing in disguise. Oh ! strange paradox.

Five minutes elapsed, in which the missionary and his wife prepared more parcels.

'Mrs. Ganley,' said the missionary.

'So you knew by the bell again !' I said, laughing. 'She's been here before, I suppose ?' for the tongue of the bell sounded one sharp ting.

'That's confidence,' answered the missionary. 'Mrs. Ganley has got over the worst, and her head is just now above water.'

Yes, it is Mrs. Ganley.

'Good afternoon—well, how is your husband ? (Mrs. Ganley is forty-five, I should say ; and very tidy in a Montagu Williams bonnet.)

'He won't be long here,' says Mrs. Ganley. 'I've seen him twice this week.'

'Let's see, how long has he been there ?' asks the missionary.

'Gettin' on for a year an' five months.'

'Rheumatism and heart, isn't it ?'

'Yes,' says Mrs. Ganley ; and then she is overcome by the vision of all her troubles.

Mrs. Ganley was summoned for not sending her girl of twelve to school, and thus became known to the missionary.

‘Let’s see, why didn’t you send her?’ he asks for my benefit, for he knows well enough.

‘I kep’ her at ’ome to help me with the match-boxes, sir.’

‘What do they pay you for boxes now?’

‘Tuppence farden a gross, and find your own paste and string,’ answers Mrs. Ganley readily.

‘And the boy, how is he getting on?’

‘Nicely, sir.’

Ganley junior, it appears, aged fourteen, had at the time when the ‘copper’ called been unable to get work because he had only rags to clothe him. No master would so much as look at such a little vagabond, and though he told the truth when he said that his best suit had gone to the pawnbroker’s, and was eaten, nobody believed it. Can you wonder? This world is full of deceit, and countless are the rogues and liars who would fatten on their richer, luckier, more provident neighbours.

‘Oh! that’s right,’ says the missionary, who, on paying the Ganley garret (no, a cellar) a visit, had presented Ganley junior with a respectable suit of clothes which got him work at once—five shillings a week. Thus his little sister, Ellen Ganley, was

released from her match boxes, and is duly attending school at this very moment.

‘Yes—he’s a very good boy indeed, and gives me all his wages,’ says Mrs. Ganley, sighing, as if she is very well aware that all boys are not so generous. Then she added in a burst of confidence: ‘Oh! he’s such a swell, sir. His master’s give him an old suit to work in, and now he keeps his best for Sundays. He’s that proud he’ll hardly speak to us—and he walked all the way to ‘Ammersmith on Sunday to show ‘em to his grandmother. And when he come back he was up two hours brushin’ of ‘em.’

Poor Mrs. Ganley, full of trouble as she was, smiled at the reminiscence.

In a minute or two she departed with one of the brown-paper parcels—contents unknown to me.

Enter Mrs. Moulds, on crutches, a victim of the rheumatics, much bowed from stooping over wash-tubs and floors. What is she? A charwoman, I suppose. She had come for boots, too. She must have wanted them badly, for Mrs. Moulds is the mother of nine, including a set of twins. Mr. Moulds (occupation not mentioned) had deserted her before her last baby was born, and a warrant was out for his arrest. How did the missionary come to make her acquaintance? The ‘copper’ again. Mrs. Moulds was summoned for not sending

the eldest of her brood to school. 'Little Ader, you know, sir,' she says, in reply to a question (again for my benefit).

'I kep' 'er at 'ome to nuss my daughter's three little ones' (philoprogenitiveness, thy name is Moulds !), 'er 'usband, pore feller, having been run over, and died in the infirmary, and they were thrown on my 'ands, too. My daughter's got work again, Mr. Massey, and has taken back her children, and Ader is now goin' reg'ler.'

Mrs. Moulds, after fumbling in her gown for a minute, produced three thin strips of newspaper, each of which represented the size of a little foot, and soon she went away smiling.

Then the bell never rested—tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, —TING—TING—TING—according to the moods of the visitors.

Enter Mrs. Stubbings. Her husband, she informed us, was a brute. Where was he? In prison, for assaulting her. She was the mother of five, and had also come for boots. How did she live? Chared when she could get charing. Also turned the mangle for her mother. Oh! she could rub along all right now that she had boots for her little ones—this was a school case, too—if that brute of a husband would only let her alone.

Enter Mrs. Hawker, in crape.

'Your husband's dead, isn't he, Mrs. Hawker?'

‘ Yes, sir.’

‘ Let’s see. How much did you get from the club ?’

‘ Six pounds, sir.’

‘ Did it all go in the funeral ?’

‘ Why, yes ; you wouldn’t have me spend that money on ourselves,’ said Mrs. Hawker, bristling up. ‘ Oh, no ! The money was for him, pore man. A good wife couldn’t do less for ’er ’usband.’

‘ Well, you know, you could get a good coffin for two pounds.’

‘ And what about the ’earse and the ’orses ? No, no,’ Mrs. Hawker went on, adjusting her crape bonnet, ‘ I’d never ’ave it said of me that I spent my ’usband’s funeral money on my inside.’

It sounds grotesquely comical, this homage to the dead. Mrs. Hawker was discovered in a cellar with two children, and her grandmother, over eighty, by one of the warrant officers, who was serving Board-school summonses. The furniture consisted of a table, two chairs, and some sacking. So the splendid funeral meant a good deal of self-denial, at all events.

There—let that be the last—the iron house was full now ; lower and lower fell the stock ; the missionary’s wife was too busy to do anything but attend to business ; the missionary took me to the door.

I was just bidding him good-bye at the gate, when a smart-looking young woman, smartly dressed, carrying a smart baby in her arms, came up, all smiles: 'I've seen him, sir'—she was much excited. 'Yes, I've seen him, at my brother-in-law's, but'—here her face fell a little—'but I don't think anything will come of it.'

'She's got a separation order,' whispered the missionary. 'I'm trying to bring them together again.'

'Why a separation?' I muttered.

'*She says he leaves her alone too much.*'

Then the missionary and the smart young woman disappeared into the house.

Into what strange company do Board-school studies take the student! But there, you have still another phase of the great Education Question.

TAMING THE WILD ONES

A FEW yards down one of Drury Lane's byways is a gloomy building with a frowning front, in the middle of which is a very stern and forbidding door. It is almost conventual in appearance, suggesting as it does a certain shyness of the world which roars without.

You ring the bell, and after waiting a minute there is a clicking as of bolts, the door opens a little, and there appears a very small and short-cropped head, the most conspicuous parts of which are two very sharp and curious eyes—like gimlets, very. 'Is the Governor in?' says the visitor. 'Yuss, sir,' says another feature of the head, a sharp slit of a mouth; 'this way, sir.' Then the door opens to a hospitable half-way, you see that the head surmounts a very tiny body belonging to a very precocious little boy, who puts his hand to his fringe or forelock, describes a quarter circle with it in the most approved military fashion, and shuts the door very carefully. The little janitor is evidently proud to be a doorkeeper, and now

regards the visitor with those scrutinising eyes of his, which are satisfied by a card. 'Wait 'ere, sir,' says he, with another quarter-circle salute, and off he strides, erect, the clatter of his boots awakening a hundred echoes in the corridors. In something less than a minute he reappears, preceded by more echoes, and with still another salute says: 'Folly me, sir.' Accordingly I followed him; indeed, I had no option, for again and again he turned round that foxy little head—just like a Tom Sayers in a boxing bout—and pierced me through with those gimlet eyes, as if to make sure that I had not run away, or did not contemplate a raid. What a gaoler he will make some day! Then I am ushered into the presence of the Governor, and there are *two* more salutes, one for that august person, the other for the visitor, who is announced as 'the gen'lman, please sir.' This duty being done, the janitor turns round, marches out of the room with sharp foot, closes the door, and hurries off to watch the door again.

It is a large room, with half-windows high up in the end wall; with a cheerful fire; with a large table in the middle of it, littered with documents at which the Governor I sought was working. He is a tall man, and grave, upon whose countenance responsibility has set its marks. Is he not the awful embodiment of law and social order to some

hundred little fellows like our friend the janitor, and a dozen girls ?

We are now in the very heart of what is known as the Day Industrial School, an experiment in taming the wild ones which the Board has undertaken.

Wild ones are tamed in various ways. Some go to certain austere establishments for a short term of discipline ; others for a period of years ; these in Drury Lane here are dealt with day by day. Hither they come as the clock of the Law Courts booms out eight, and here they remain until the neighbourly timepiece announces that it is six in the evening. Between these hours high walls and the door of conventual aspect hold them fast, though it is a very pleasant cage indeed. Between these hours they are washed copiously and frequently, dried, combed, fed, taught, and drilled—the boys and girls. And at certain intervals comes a little recreation, either down below or on the roof—roofs make admirable playgrounds, and land is measured by the square inch in this part of the world, squalid though it is. And when the clock strikes six the janitor flings open the front door, and the school goes HOME.

What homes some of them are in this very Drury Lane, the very centre of this vast capital—in the Lane and the seamy sordid mesh of by-

ways which connect the Strand with Holborn ! What Alsatias abound in these regions even now, though the wrecker's pick is seldom at rest ! What sights meet the eye as it glances into the foul, beetling courts, and the furtive, twisting alleys ! What misery, what grinding poverty they hide ! What fearful struggles for life ! What crime and wickedness ! Do you wonder that the genial publican grows fat, that his palace grows more brilliant ? Do you wonder that doles attract them ? That they go begging for pieces at the kitchen-doors of hotels and restaurants, at coffee shops, at fish shops, at bread shops ? Why, even the very babes will go to two Sunday Schools to get two feasts ! The marvel is that Education can do anything at all in such a quarter.

Let me introduce you to a few of the infantile products whom the policeman has brought to the door of the conventual aspect, together with an order from the magistrate. Whilst I am talking with Governor Humphreys, they come into the room on various businesses.

A modest tap sounds on the door, which opens and there walks in a maid of thirteen, with red cheeks, red hair, red arms, and red frock.

'This is Mary,' says the Governor—I will take a few liberties with my young acquaintances and their names, for obvious reasons. Why should

Mary become a public character? No, no—too much publicity has already brought her to this establishment in Drury Lane. Mary all contrary she was, not so long ago, and now listen to what passes. ‘Well, Mary, what have you there?’ says the Governor. She curtsies, and in lisping syllables answers that she has brought her washing from the laundry to submit to his notice. A brown paper parcel is nervously opened, and a number of cuffs, collars, frills, and a gentleman’s shirt-front—Mary called it a dickey—lie glistening in all the glories of starch. They were beautifully got up—white as linen should be, spotless, stiff. ‘And-please-sir-Mistress-says-will-you-let-me-have-a-WHITE-SHIRT?’ Mary gabbles this request off at a great rate, and, having blurted out the last two words, hangs down her head shyly. To be entrusted with a whole white shirt—surely a supreme test of a laundress’s abilities!—is the height of her ambition. The Governor looks at me, then at the specimens, then at Mary, and says: ‘Yes, certainly.’ Mary flushed with pleasure, tied up her parcel, and admitted in a burst of elation that she certainly proposes to enter a laundry when she is free and fourteen. But a pretty pickle she was before they caught her. At that time she was a trotter. From early morn till late eve she trotted to and fro between the East and the West, with

patterns to match—silks, stuffs, and so on—and by her skill in such matters of business was able to add considerably to the income of her parents. But at what a cost ! Though she knew her Catechism well, it is said that with mere A B and C she was but ill acquainted ; fancy a big girl like that ! An indefatigable trotter, her trotting never lay in the direction of school. Never ! Or scarcely ever. What a change even a few short months of discipline, of regular habits, of order, of opportunity, have made in Mary ! Already she despises the peripatetic trade of trotting and its temptations, and has conceived almost a passion for the more substantial and lucrative art of washing. Moreover, she has wrestled with and fairly beaten that dragon ‘Alphabet,’ that demon ‘Arithmetic.’ Surely it is well for the community that even the laundress should be mistress of the rudiments, else is she wont to mix our shirts and collars with others that are the worse for wear ; nor will she prefer subtraction to addition, as washerwomen are so wont to do, but adhere rigidly to the rules. Mental arithmetic and rule of thumb may do for the trotter, but trotting is not business. So much for Mary.

Enter Peter, with a quarter-circle salute ; twelve in years ; fringe on forehead, otherwise hair cropped short ; a pair of laughing blue eyes ; and

an open front, with a decided leaning towards the reckless. 'Dinner's ready, sir,' says he, and stands at attention.

'Peter, tell us why the policeman brought you here, will you?' says the Governor.

'Yuss, sir,' answers Peter readily and inclined to smile. ''Cos he caught me singin'.'

Here I was allowed to carry on the conversation.

'Where, Peter?' I asked.

'Outside the Al'ambrrer, sir.'

'Did you often go there?'

'Yuss, sir, till the copper got me.' Then he laughed.

'How much did you make, Peter?'

'We divided it, sir—a tanner or two in good times.'

'Oh! there were two of you?'

'Yuss; only 'e took the 'at round, 'e did.'

'And what did you sing?'

'Sumfink as made 'em larf, sir; they won't have the cryin' uns.'

'Oh! they like the comic songs best, eh?'

'Yuss, sir.'

'And what did you sing?'

Peter looked at the Governor, as if asking his permission to give an example of his powers. The Governor making no objections, he then put one foot forward an inch or two, threw back his head, cleared

his throat in the approved professional manner, and burst forth into the following ditty :

Now I'm a very handy man,
To save a bit of oof's my plan ;
One day last week I said to my wife
Our yard wants a wash and upon my life
So I'll get and do the job, and I did, so help my bob ;
I made a pail of whitewash, and set to work,
The old girl helped me like a Turk.

Then he stopped short for a moment, said 'Chorus,' and proceeded—*alone*, though, I should like to interject—with this refrain :

Slap dab, slap dab up and down the brickwork ;
Slab dab all day long.
In and out the corners, round the Johnny Horners.
We were a pair of fair clean goners.
Slap dab, slap with a whitewash brush,
Talk about a fancy ball ;
For I put more white'ash on the old woman
Than I did on the garden wall.

It will be observed that the lines halt here and there ; some are too long, others are too short, but it was all the same to Peter. I am sure that a little schooling will do no harm to a boy who talks about 'oof,' and his 'old woman,' and 'goners' in that familiar way. Then I asked him what the delightful piece was called.

" 'The Amueter Whitewasher,' please sir," said he, 'but it didn't go down so well as "He'll have a lively time."'

‘No?’

‘No;’ and Peter shook his head emphatically, and was very serious. He had got over his awe of the Governor now, and without any pressing trolled forth the song that turned the money in. It is all about a mother-in-law, who suddenly appeared in the singer’s house. As so many husbands do, Peter—or rather the singer—strongly objected to this invasion of the domestic hearth, and to revenge himself did as follows:

Round to the baker’s I went in a tick,
Bought a quatten loaf quite as hard as a brick;
Went to a shop where fish was sold,
Bought a pair of kippers a fortnight old;
Fourpence I paid for some mouldy cheese,
Talk about the breeze strong enough to sneeze;
Then I bought one pound of margarine,
Talk about the scene it was turning green.
When the shopman looked at me I said,
It’s all right, cockie.

I suppose the articles mentioned form the staple diet of a good many folks about Drury Lane. By their songs shall you know them.

‘And it’s a good one, is it, Peter?’ I went on, not caring to press him too much. ‘Were you singing that when the copper ran you in?’

‘No, sir. “For me, for me.”’

‘Indeed.’

‘It’s like this, sir.’ Then, with watchful eye on the Governor, he told us that :

Yesterday I met a country josser,
And I done him for his watch and chain ;
On his nose I hit him such a wopper,
He fell flat on his back
In a place called Drury Lane.

For me, for me,
They’re waitin’ there for me ;
They will have to wait till the moon turns green,
I did a bunk, God save the Queen.

And now do audiences wait for Peter in vain. And very glad we ought to be that the Board has got hold of Peter so early. And *he* ought to be glad too, I think. Though he goes home of an evening, his ambitions lie in other directions than the outside of the Alhambra. He is in training for a shoemaker. Surely that honourable trade is better far than ‘busking,’ or hitting ‘woppers’ in the Lane ! But how, you very reasonably ask, did Peter’s parents come to let him stop out so late ? Well, Peter has only one parent, and she is a cook. At six A.M. it is her duty to rise and go forth into the morning air to earn her daily bread, and to earn the four and sixpence which her landlord demands for the room she and Peter live in. He is her only burden, and before he was caught she gave him threepence per day to live on, turned him out, and locked up. It is, therefore, evident that

Peter was left very much to his own resources, especially during the two hours in which the ordinary schools disperse for dinner. It was then that he picked up his young partner who took the hat round. Slowly but surely did he acquire roving habits, and soon discovered that it was pleasanter to remain away from school altogether. Thus, you will readily understand that his habits became very irregular, that he kept late hours, that at length he was 'copped by the copper' (that is Peter's own way of putting it), and is now on the roll at Drury Lane Day Industrial School. But he is a fine little fellow, responsive to a kind word, a little sympathy; sensitive you know he is, for he flushes up when you speak to him in friendly tones. By the setting of his little lips I am sure he would be swift to resent a blow. Mind, I do not say that Peter is impeccable. Is anyone? At all events, such is his little history. With a salute he again reminds the Governor that dinner is ready, and follows meekly in our tracks as we march through the many echoing corridors to the dining-room. Peter now turns waiter; he hands round the plates; he hands round the vegetables; he fills the glasses with 'aqua pura;' he brings relays of plates and pie, of spoons and forks, in the most orderly fashion, though they *do* say he breaks things. The pie has a delicious short crust, covering an ample layer of

jam, which would tempt an Anthony, but never once does Peter betray any hankering after these dainties. No, already he has learnt the great lesson of altruism, and watches us with apparent satisfaction on his cheerful countenance. So much for Peter, who once got a good living by singing 'The Amueter Whitewasher' outside the Alhambra, and in other public places where pence are plentiful. Some day, as I have hinted, he may be a flourishing bootmaker in a large way of business. Who can say? If he does, he owes it to the London School Board, and Governor Humphreys, their representative.

We leave him to clear up, and go down into the dining-room, in which a hundred boys and girls are consuming pudding at a remarkable rate. The changes are rung on pudding, beef, mutton, and Irish stew for dinner; whilst for breakfast and tea, porridge, tea, coffee, cocoa, bread, dripping, and treacle are given in ample quantities. At the top of the room stands the mistress of this interesting ceremony; platters are cleaned, mugs are empty, the signal is given, platters are held up in air and passed to the end boy on each of the row of benches. Then the hundred rise, at another signal sing a pretty 'grace,' and march forth like soldiers to the playground. The end boys swiftly carry the platters to the kitchen, the knife and fork

boys follow at their heels, and dinner is done for the day.

‘Stop, Billy,’ says the Governor, beckoning a knife and fork boy to his side. ‘This is Billy Taylor. What time do you get here in the morning, Billy?’

‘Quarter-past six, sir,’ answers Billy, with the usual salute, which is described with the knives and forks. Billy’s clothes have seen better days, but he himself is in the best of condition, clean of face, and in full possession of all his faculties. He is but twelve, but has the trading instincts of a Barnato. He will rise in the world, will Billy, I am sure, though he *was* run in by the copper for selling matches at hours when he certainly should have been at school. But there are many excuses for little Billy (he is still struggling with his single syllables). His mother is a widow and a step-cleaner; when not suffering from those rheumatic pains which inevitably accompany that curious profession, she is able to earn some twelve shillings a week; she rises at six A.M., rouses Billy out of bed, locks the door, puts the key in her pocket, and mother and son see one another no more until evening comes. So that you will easily understand how Billy fell into bad habits. He might have sunk deeper and deeper into the mire. I fancy that life has few mysteries for Billy, though

he is but twelve. He knows all about 'winners,' he has 'put a bit on' before to-day, I am sure ; I dare say he is familiar enough with the gambler's wiles—there is many a modest Monte Carlo in the precincts of Drury Lane—dark doorsteps, gloomy courts where halfpence jingle in defiance of the copper. And we all know what gambling and 'winners' lead to—crime, in a thousand hideous forms. However, the copper caught him in time ; and here he is, a model Billy, thanks to this experiment in education which has been evolved from years of experience with a multitude of boys. And of a night he goes home to his mother, the step-cleaner. He has retired from the match trade, and now indulges his appetite for barter by dealing in rabbits and linnets. He now has a hankering after carpentry.

It was Billy I saw a little later doing his big O's in his copy-book. It was Billy who, on being asked where the words, 'To your tents, O Israel!' came from, answered that it was what Moses said when it came on to rain. Then Billy especially prides himself on being a great arguer. He loves the clash of mind against mind. One day he was seen bathed in tears, and on being asked what was the matter with him by a besom friend, sobbed out that Archie McLeod had beaten him in an argument. Archie was a hard-headed little Scot who

always got him into a tangle in five minutes. 'How is that, Billy?' I asked. Billy looked up at me to see if I was making fun of him, but I was very grave, so he told me the secret very willingly. 'He takes a hunfair adwantage, sir,' said he. 'When I makes a mistake, a real mistake when we're arguin' he takes 'old of that, and whatever you say arterwards he keeps a frowin' of it in your teef.' Then he pouted, and an angry glint came into his bold eyes. He is too impatient, I fancy, too restless, to make a really first-class arguer—like the Chief Justice, say, or Sir Edward Clarke or Mr. Chamberlain. Further practice with Archie McLeod may yet do wonders for him, but your Scot is fearfully tenacious.

Many a strange history do I hear from Governor Humphreys as we pass from room to room. Many a pathetic incident, many a story of suffering patiently borne, of unmentionable wickedness; what a jumble it all is, to be sure! what a maze! Who can say that he sees his way through it? Here comes a little girl, crying bitterly, begging to go home. Why? 'The brokers are in, and mother wants me to mind the baby while she gits lodgings.' Is this true? Bitter experience knows that tears are unreliable. The statement must be investigated, or a hundred more brokers would be 'in,' and the school would be empty. Here is a pretty girl of

thirteen, who scarcely knows her letters. What has she done? Not stolen, not gone a-begging, not sold matches; no, she is one of another class, the pampered ones, the only ones, the spoilt children who are kept at home for an ache or pain, if it rains, if it is cold. Here is the son of a sailor, who was brought by his father and mother to the door of the conventual aspect. With tears in their eyes they declared that they could not keep the boy away from the ships at London Bridge. This boy has a craze for going with carters and horses; this frequents Covent Garden and the parks, and his parents can do nothing with him. These children and their stories present many a perplexing problem.

The most ignorant of them, who are often the biggest, are kept at schoolwork all day, coping with the rudiments; the more advanced devote half the day to various industrial pursuits. Here are a dozen little shoemakers, leather aproned, each on his lonely stool, striving with the hides, riveting, closing, finishing, polishing, stitching—I know not the technical terms. The tools of the handicraft lie close to hand in profusion, a pleasant flavour of hides perfumes the room, the master stands at his bench, at work himself. They make boots for the Board, braces for the Board, slippers for the Board; it is no useless toil upon which they

are engaged. And the master says that his best pupils will be well worth their salt when they come of age—that is, with our working population, fourteen.

Here are thirty little carpenters, busy with rule and square, and pencil, marking off right angles for a working drawing. Cases of chisels, saws, hammers, are ranged between the benches; the master goes round and round amongst them with exemplary patience, or stands at the blackboard the better to instil the elementary principles of the carpenter's art. Then theory is put into practice, strips of wood are distributed, and thirty chisels are following line and angle.

Here is the laundry, warm with vapour, full of busy children—some washing, others ironing, others starching, others hanging up to dry—whilst two stalwart boys turn a beautiful mangle. This is the Board washing. It is a cheerful scene.

Here are the school-rooms, each in charge of a lady, who, from what I saw, evidently put her heart into the work. And hearts are wanted, as well as heads, in such an experiment as this. A little timely kindness, a soft word, affects the truculent London Arab (sometimes to tears, I am told), when a blow or a cuff would make him set his teeth in stubborn defiance. With the strife and turmoil of the roaring streets they are well able to cope; but the Alphabet—the word-building, read-

ing, writing, arithmetic—well, their struggles are awful to behold! Perhaps we have to thank Miss Davenport Hill and Mrs. Homan for this departure—those well-known women workers spend much of their time within these walls, watching and aiding the experiment of Education. What soldiers some of those Arabs would make! With what fire and spirit they sing a martial air for my edification:

The bugle sounds the call to arms,
Our soldiers march away,
And proudly for their country's cause
They'll conquer in the fray.
Off to the wars they are marching,
Bravely they march away,
Bravely to fight for country and right,
Fearless amidst the fray.

The air is still in my ears. Then the Governor is called away to attend to the little girl whose poor mother has got the brokers in. I would that space allowed me to do more justice to his admirable work amongst the wild ones. I can quite understand the position—for the long day, at all events, they are in good company; habits of order, obedience, cleanliness, self-respect, are slowly instilled into the most rebellious bosoms; the varied training helped to form character; and yet the family tie is retained, and the children undoubtedly influence in their turn their own parents. In con-

clusion, I may say that, besides the daily religious instruction, the Rev. Father Watson and the Rev. Mr. Evans, one a Roman Catholic, the other a Protestant priest, take each a class once a week ; and Mr. Athelstan Riley is the chairman.

Thus do the lions with the lambs lie down together.

The economists will be glad to know that the parents PAY.

TRUANTS

THE sun is pouring into a grim, long room in which two-and-twenty boys are standing at attention. Along three walls they are ranged, with chests well out, heads erect, arms close to sides, toes of boots tight together. Please imagine two-and-twenty smiling faces, clean and highly polished, each crowned with a short crop, a fringe here and there falling in hairy cascades over foreheads, bodies clad in two-and-twenty suits of the most varying sizes, colours, and patterns. Now you will be able to form some sort of notion of the truants who are just about to be restored to their liberty and the sweets of the sunny world without.

Enter Governor Peall and Dr. King, who seat themselves at a grim and business-like table, on which are scattered many blue bits of paper, ledgers, and other manuscripts.

‘Attention,’ says the Governor.

‘Are you all well, boys?’ says the Doctor.

‘Yuss, sir’—it is always ‘Yuss.’ Twenty-two little hands saw the air in a cheerful salute.

‘All of you ! Hands up, anyone who has a sore place.’

A small hand is at once raised.

‘Johnny Doke ? Well, what is the matter with you ?’

‘Please, sir, Fred Smith kicked me on the nose,’ and then, amidst a general titter, little Doke indicated a slight scratch on the bridge of a pudgy pimple, convulsed with laughter himself.

‘That’s all, is it ?’ says the Doctor. ‘Now all strip.’

Off go hats, boots, coats, trousers, shirts and socks like the wind ; two-and-twenty bundles of clothing are piled up neatly on the floor ; two-and-twenty truants stand up again, heads up, chests well out, backs to wall, each as naked as he was born. There is not a blemish to be seen—clear healthy skins, fine muscular development. What a difference from three short months ago ! The Doctor walks slowly along the ranks, with scrutinising eye and lunging finger ; smiles as though well satisfied ; returns to his seat ; sets to work on his ledger.

‘Dress,’ says the Governor.

And once more the grim room becomes the scene of immense sartorial activity.

Three months ago they came in steeped in London grime—compost which defies analysis ;

ragged and tattered from long indifference to appearances; wild, harum-scarum Arabs who hated school and all its works; the despair of fathers and mothers; the terror of peaceful citizens; and dunces. No; dunce is not the word—many are in Standard Nought.

But they are all ready, and stand cap in hand.

‘Now,’ says the Governor, ‘those boys who have had boots, hold up your hands’—‘knickerbockers’—‘trousers’—‘jackets’—‘overcoats.’

Most of them held up a hand at the mention of one of these articles; no one had got a whole suit, I fancy, but disreputable rags and patches had been made whole; missing garments had been replaced; boots had got new soles or heels, and not one of them could now truthfully say that he had no clothes to go to school in.

But the big bell without is ever jangling, we can hear the gate boy running to and fro, we can hear heavier footsteps than his, and deeper voices.

Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, kindly neighbours are coming one after the other in quick succession to take their respective Truants home. Ah! there is no truer saying than that very familiar one which all of us know so well:

Be it ever so humble, there's no place like Home.

Even an Old Kent Road Home ! A Drury Lane Home ! A Lisson Grove Home ! Woolwich ! Greenwich ! Borough ! No—‘ *be it ever so humble, there is no place like Home.*’ At least I came to that conclusion this morning. It is a remarkable social fact. What a difference has a short seclusion from the bustling world brought about ! For there certainly *was* a time when Home had few attractions.

But you shall judge for yourselves. The two-and-twenty Truants have long since been dismissed. Dr. King says, ‘ Good morning ;’ the Governor sits at the table, and enter Mrs. Figg, a very respectable lady in gown and cloak of gray stuff, with a neat and tidy bonnet, gloves on her hands, and a little black bag. She is accompanied by her youngest son.

‘ Well, Mrs. Figg, I’m glad to tell you that Teddy’s been a good boy since he’s been here.’

‘ Yes, sir, he *is* a good boy,’ says Mrs. Figg gently.

‘ But he’s very backward, you know, Mrs. Figg. He can only read words of one syllable. How old is he ? Getting on for thirteen ! That’s not good, you know, is it ? ’

‘ No, sir, it ain’t,’ replies Mrs. Figg, a little despondent, fumbling with the bag. Then she breaks

out into a smile. 'He's always bin queer in 'is 'ed since he had them German measles.'

'But that's a long time ago, isn't it?'

'Yes, sir, it is; it's no use my sayin' it ain't. It's that Joe Crick as leads 'im away. There's a whole gang of 'em.'

At this moment Teddy comes in, a straw-haired, nervous little fellow. 'Hallo! Doddy, you *do* look well,' and then she falls on his neck and kisses him again and again.

Overcome by contending emotions, poor Teddy—or Doddy, as she called him—burst into a passionate fit of weeping. He sits and sighs and sobs. Then his mother began to cry, but, getting command of herself, she said sadly, 'Ere, Doddy, you mustn't go on like that when you see your father—you're his favourite.' Then the poor woman began to sob bitterly. 'He's been in bed fourteen weeks, sir'—this to the Governor—'and he'll never come downstairs again—until they carry him.' This set Doddy off again, and the tiny boy, too. What little tragedies do Studies in Board Schools and their mazes reveal!

But then Mrs. Figg, conscious of many responsibilities, dried her eyes, threw her head upwards, and, catching hold of Doddy with some force, said sharply, 'I'll take care 'e don't go with that Joe Crick and 'is lot again!'

The Governor thereupon handed her a bit of blue paper (Doddy's release), a card of prayers, and a New Testament. 'Be a good boy now, Figg,' he adds, shakes him by the hand, and the three disappear.

The next to enter was Mrs. Nunn, a buxom lady, mostly in black, *very* buxom, very cheerful, carrying a baby in her arms, which, she explained, was her daughter's, and leading by the hand a little boy of her own with a sailor's cap on—'H.M.S. Formidable.'

'He's in the Navy,' says the Governor pleasantly, and then sends for Bill Nunn. Bill and his mother had already met, so there was no greeting.

'Well, Mrs. Nunn, he can write and read a *little* now; let's see, how many times have we had him? Three times!—for three months, four months, *six* months. Why don't you make him go to school, instead of letting him run about the streets?'

'Well, sir, he played truant at the first onset becos his teacher showed him the cane.'

'Well, there are worse things than canes, you know, Mrs. Nunn,'—a remark at which Bill Nunn nodded gravely.

'Oh! you think so, do you, Nunn?' says the Governor. 'You don't like coming here, then?'

‘No, sir,’ sobs Bill. The tears are ever at the call of these penitent truants *when still in durance.*

‘Why not? You get lots to eat, and clean clothes, and clean bed. Why don’t you like it?’

Imagine Bill’s tell-tale face—a very open one—twisted into a thousand twitching wrinkles; imagine his voice broken by sobs; imagine in whimpers this:

‘I like the streets better, sir.’

Oh! roaring streets of Babylon, ever-moving panorama, ye are in truth responsible for many a downfall!

Then Mrs. Nunn comes to the rescue of Billy. ‘He’ll never be a skollard, sir,’ she says cheerfully. ‘It ain’t no good. You can’t drive it into his noddle. I’ll defy you.’

‘Well,’ says the Governor doubtfully, ‘let’s see now. Nunn, can you read this?’ and he hands him a card of prayers. This, I must explain, contains a short morning prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, and an evening prayer.

Billy took hold of it, and said at once, with a smile, ‘Yuss, sir, I can read it.’

‘Well, go on,’ says the Governor.

And Billy began to gabble off the Lord’s Prayer at an astonishing speed.

‘No—no—no—Nunn,’ says the Governor, smiling, ‘*the Morning Prayer*, the one at the top.’

Billy’s face dropped at once ; the smiles disappear, and he began to stutter :

‘O—God,—my God,—e-e-e’

‘*Oh ! spit it out, Billy,*’ cried his mother very impatiently.

The word was only ‘early,’ but it completely baffled poor Bill Nunn. Completely ! Of course the artful fellow knew the prayer in the middle off by heart.

The wiles of these Arabs !

‘I told you, sir. I’ll defy you to make a skollard of him.’

‘Well, what’s he going to do if he can’t read and write ?’ asks the Governor.

‘He’s ’ad a job at Pickford’s already, sir,’ comes the answer, with some triumph. ‘Six shillin’ a week.’

‘What ! Can he read the writing on the parcels ?’

‘Yuss, sir,’ interrupts Billy.

And so he could. We tried him with a little simple manuscript.

‘He’ll be fourteen, thank God,’ says Mrs. Nunn fervently, ‘next Boxin’ Day, and then he’s done with Boards for ever !’

Mrs. Closs now comes in with Tommy Closs, a

stupid, heavy-looking boy of thirteen. Thanks to the Truant School, he is now familiar with words of one syllable.

‘Now, Mrs. Closs, can’t you manage to keep him at school?’

‘I’ll do my best, sir,’ sighs Mrs. Closs, one of those sad, pallid, hatchet-faced London women, with bones protruding everywhere.

Tommy Closs, indeed, bears a bad character. He not only declines to go to school himself, but, with a band of nine others as bad as himself, actually conspires to prevent other boys from doing so. It was their practice to lie in wait at street corners when the bell was ringing, and pounce down on hurrying little scholars, whom they carried off till doors were closed. Did you ever hear of such iniquity? But it came out in course of cross-examination that, until he disappeared for a whole month, Tommy always went home to his dinner, though he never by any chance went to school.

‘Oh!’ said the Governor, a little sternly, looking into Tommy’s sulky face. ‘Oh! that’s it, is it? DINNER.’ Then he tapped Tommy’s stomach sharply.

‘You like *this* to be filled, do you?’

Here Tommy broke down—sob, sob, sob.
‘Y—S—SS, sir.’

‘ You tell the truth, then, for once. You like it filled, do you ? ’

‘ Y—s—s, sir.’

‘ Well, you’ll never get it filled unless you go to school, I can tell you. How are you going to get work unless you can read and write, eh ? Tell me.’

‘ Don’t know, sir.’ Sob, sob, sob.

‘ You’ll have no mother to fill it for you, you know.’

Sob, sob, sob.

‘ I suppose you think other people are going to do it ? No, no, Tommy Closs ; you’ll have to work and fill it for yourself.’

But it also appeared that he and his friends gathered funds by selling wood from empty houses at a penny an armful, and held unholy feasts in secret places. Tommy is also a devoted disciple of Isaak Walton ; he is fond of the beauties of the Park ; he loves the cheerful Strand, roaring Fleet Street, the Hill of Ludgate ; he voyages on the dark bosoms of winding canals ; he takes surreptitious journeys by trains. I fear Tom Closs will yet cost us dear.

‘ Well, will you be a good boy, Tommy ? ’ says the Governor, still sternly. ‘ You know as well as I do what it will end in if you don’t. You don’t want to be sent away till you’re sixteen, do you ? ’

‘ N—n—n—O, sir.’

‘ Well, you know what raking the streets ends in, don’t you ? You think a loafer’s is a nice life, do you ? A thing that hangs about the corners with a short pipe in his mouth, and waiting for other people to fill it. *Be a good boy now, Tommy.* We don’t *want* you here again, not at all. It’s all your own fault, isn’t it, now ? ’

‘ Y—y—u—sss, sir.’

‘ Now, take this card, and make him say his prayers, Mrs. Closs, like he’s done with us. Morning and night—Closs. Let’s see, you’ve got a Testament already, haven’t you ? ’

‘ No, sir,’ interjects Mrs. Closs, ‘ baby’s ’ad it to play with.’

This was candid, at all events ; and, with a friendly word of remonstrance, the Governor placed a new one in Tommy’s hand. It may have been his natural acquisitiveness, the love of property ; but, at all events, Tommy placed it very carefully in his bosom, and, having shaken his master by the hand, dried his tears, and walked humbly away with his poor mother.

Before he had reached the door, however, he turned on his heel and came back to the table.

‘ Well, what is it, Closs ? ’

But he only hung down his head, after glancing askance at a little pile of coppers which lay amongst the ledgers.

‘ Oh ! I’d forgotten,’ says the Governor, laughing. Then he consulted a little manuscript, and said, ‘ How much is it ? ’

‘ A ’apenny, sir,’ replies Tommy, now all smiles.

I dare say that for five long months he had dwelt with many a pang upon the fate of this humble copper coin. Some lady had given it to him when he appeared at the police court. I dare say it had appeared to him in many an awful dream, to solace his troubled soul, perhaps his aching body. See how fervently he clasps it in his palm ! and then struts out—the capitalist. Even the wickedest of these little fellows has a soul, if you can only reach it. Certainly no one can long make studies in Board schools without being astounded by the marvellous system which has been evolved in twenty-five short years. To appreciate it one has only to turn to, say, ‘ Lord Shaftesbury’s Life,’ and the history of the old days of the ragged schools.

I witnessed many other scenes like the ones which I have rapidly splashed down for you upon paper, each differing in some respect from the other. But my little stories are enough to show how London’s truants are dealt with. The Board is, indeed, a good parent—in the highest sense of the word.

Governor Peall introduces me to room after room, full of truants, struggling with A and B, and One and Two. Such big boys that I cannot but accept a very common excuse for non-attendance at the ordinary schools: 'The little boys laugh at us, sir,' some of them tell us. So for very shame many a one, when he is got to Highbury (the school in which we now are), buckles to in earnest, and often enough turns out a decent citizen. Listen to this amusing little epistle, evidently written from the fulness of his heart—his name, oddly enough, is Prudence.

Sir,—I am glad I took your advice, and I go to school like a good boy, and I hope all the boys in the school will take your advice you gave them. I will come down on Christmas and see you, and I hope Guy is all right, and tell cook I hope she is all right, and tell all the boys to be good, and when they come out tell them to keep away from bad companions and go to—smudge (presumably school), and tell Mr. Peck I wish him a merry Christmas and Mr. Barnet the same, and my finger is all right, and can I leave school this year, because my father is got the gout as I want to go to work.

Then follow a number of small crosses representing kisses for Guy, whoever *he* is—a truant in durance, of course.

They won't go to school because they don't like it.

There are some two hundred of these little fellows here, within these not very high walls, in

this great building, in this breezy, healthy, old-world Canonbury. None of them liked school. They say so honestly enough, even to the Governor, who must be an awful person in their eyes. They will work willingly, many of them ; they are only too anxious to contribute to the family exchequer ; *but they won't go to school because they don't like it.* So the Board with infinite difficulty catches them, better late than never, and the magistrate commits them to the Truant School till they are fourteen. But if they do well they are let out 'on licence' after three months' discipline, the condition being that they *go to school*. Some do, many don't, and these surely arrive again and again. But every visit improves them, and Standard One, or Two, or Three is far better than Standard NOUGHT.

Besides learning the rudiments, they are tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, cooks, housemaids, mat-makers, needle-boys—that is, stocking darners and patchers, and bakers. It is very interesting to see them all at work in the respective rooms where these trades are in progress. Not many of them follow these businesses later on, I dare say ; but the habits of order, the necessity for method, obedience, self-respect, cannot fail to serve them. Listen to this. It arrived during my visit from an old truant, who is now in her Majesty's Navy :

No doubt Sir you were my best friend to learn me the Baker Trade which I so foolish gave up and after all your trouble and goodness towards me Sir. Now Sir I am first class fireman and can look after an Boiler Sir and have taken great liking to my work. I am at present watch keeping on the Auxily Boiler with three fires and keeping 100 Pounds of Steam.

He is keeping the steam up, you see, and the original fuel was certainly stuffed into him by Governor Peall and his faithful staff.

I believe the admirable physical exercises which the truants engage in day by day are responsible, in no small measure, for much good. Mr. Clark is at this moment conducting them in the great yard, assisted by truant monitors, promoted to the proud position of instructors. 'Trunks backward—bend—heels raised—lower—stretch—right turn—march.' It is like a great company of recruits, only there are no goose steps, but most intricate and difficult exercises. The truants hop, and jump, and perform many evolutions and then we go to dinner in the great hall.

Two hundred childish voices sing grace to the strains of a harmonium :

Bè present at our table, Lord,
Be here and everywhere adored ;
Thy creatures bless, and grant that we
May feast in Paradise with Thee.

And then we are steeped in fragrant vapour. It is soup day—thick appetising platefuls ; great hunks of bread ; big mugs of sweet water.

But this is a punitive school, and work is the order of the day from morn till night, with very brief relaxation, and *no* liberty till the time is done.

Morning and night there are prayers in the Hall, and hymns. On Fridays Mr. Sharp, the Chairman of the Committee, comes and talks to the truants ; it is he who provides those friendly little Testaments. On a Sunday the Governor inculcates many a lesson in morality and conduct.

Such is a Truant School in the year 1897.

RELIGIOUS LESSONS

In the schools provided by the Board the Bible shall be read, and there shall be given such explanations and such instruction therefrom in the principles of the Christian Religion and of Morality as are suited to the capacities of Children. The teachers are desired to make the lessons as practical as possible, and not to give attention to unnecessary details.—*Extract from the School Board Code of Regulations.*

A NOTABLE landmark in the toiling quarter we call Clerkenwell is the Hugh Myddelton Board School, which some three years ago took the place of the House of Detention. Above, its red walls tower into the air; below, you may still see a maze of hideous cells where not so long ago the furtive criminal crouched. Black, thick with the dust of ages, spider-spun, the massive masonry now serves as a foundation for that other building above. So that the Hugh Myddelton School is notable in more senses than one. A prison was closed for want of criminals; a school was opened for the wants of children.

It is nine o'clock, and two thousand boys and

girls swarm into their various rooms ; masters and mistresses call the rolls ; boys and girls march forth into the three halls in well-drilled regiments for morning prayers.

Let us follow the head-master, Mr. Ellson, and his army. Imagine an airy chamber into which the morning sun is streaming ; fill it with some six hundred boys drawn up into long lines, at the head of each of which is a teacher. The head-master ascends in solitary state to the platform, takes his stand at the table, casts one comprehensive look upon the faces below him, sings a few notes, waves his bâton, and six hundred childish voices sing the hymn :

Hark, my soul, it is the Lord ;
'Tis thy Saviour, hear His word ;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
' Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou Me.'

How sweet and fresh sound the lovely trebles, the rich altos ! I do not wonder that the choir-master (Mr. T. H. Hodges) is proud of his choir, that he thinks no labour too great to expend upon them. Then comes the prayer from the Morning Service.

O Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this day, defend us in the same by Thy mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger ; but that in all our doings we may be ordered by Thy governance to do always that is righteous in Thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

‘Eyes closed, hands clasped,’ cries Mr. Ellson, who then says the Lord’s Prayer, the six hundred following him, with faces uplifted, eyes closed, hands clasped. It is an affecting sight.

‘’Tention,’ cries the head-master, leaving Godliness and coming to cleanliness. ‘Hands up—front—back—march.’

And the boy regiments file out, there is a tramping of many small feet upon the floor, and six hundred small voices troll forth a gay air :

With ribbons gaily streaming,
I’m a soldier now, Loissette,
I’m a soldier now, Loissette,
And of battle I am dreaming,
And the honours I shall get.
With a sabre by my side
And a helmet on my brow,
And a proud steed to ride,
I shall rush upon the foe.
Yes, I flatter my Loissette,
’Tis a life that well will suit,
The gay life of a young recruit,
The gay life of a young recruit.

Such, then, are the various ceremonies which precede a day’s work in a Board school. Now come with me into the room where the boys of the first class, mostly twelve or thirteen, are seated, and listen to the first lesson of the day. Invariably it is Religious Instruction.

The master, Mr. Richards, opened his Bible at the Epistle to the Ephesians, and began :

‘ Who wrote the Epistle ? ’

‘ St. Paul. ’

‘ And who was he ? ’

‘ An apostle. ’

‘ Yes, a great Christian teacher, very well qualified to give advice. We don’t take the advice of the first person we meet, do we ? When we are in trouble or in a difficulty we seek someone upon whom we think we can rely. And St. Paul had had great experience of the world ; he had suffered much himself, seen many troubles, he had travelled far and wide ; he was a good man and therefore —— ’

‘ He was well qualified to advise others. ’

‘ Quite so. Lloyd, read the first verse. ’

So Lloyd, a slim youth in a wide Eton collar, a sky-blue silk bow, a neat jacket, and a pair of knickerbockers, rose to his feet and read in a clear voice : ‘ Children, obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is right. ’ Then he sat down.

‘ Now, *why* should you be very obedient to your parents ? What is the reason ? ’

Many hands were held up, and one, being singled out, proclaimed that our parents have more experience than we have.

‘ Yes, they have gone through the same trials that beset us. They have met them often ; and

experience has taught them, or should have taught them. They have, therefore, acquired knowledge which is very useful. Now, who can tell me any other reason why we should obey our parents ?'

'Because they keep us in our younger days,' cries one.

'Because they clothe us,' cries another.

'Yes ; they have fed you, clothed you, looked after you when you were helpless. They have helped you and care for you, and therefore they have a great claim upon your obedience and love. Then, again, it is very necessary in a family that there should be law and order. There would be no peace nor happiness without rules and regulations. Remember that, boys. I *have* known families where a child has been spoilt by its parents, allowed to do just what it likes. Its will was law.' There is a little giggling at this home thrust, and I see two or three faces flush a rather guilty pink.

'Oh ! None of you boys are spoilt, surely,' interjects the master, with just a tinge of irony in his voice. 'Ah ! we teachers can always pick out one of those spoiled children. We soon get to know their true characters. They soon find their level, don't they ? They soon find they have to do as they're told, or else——' Here there was a painful hush. 'Yes, it's very bad for such boys as those when they come into contact with the world.

It's a very bitter lesson they have to learn, that of giving in to others. But it's a *grand* thing. Why, what a world it would be if we all did as we chose; if there were no rules, no law, no order! So, whether it's a big family, a school, or in the great world itself, we have to give in, *for the good of the greater number*, for the good of the *lot*, for the good of the——'

'Majority.'

'Yes, the State is only a very large family, and you must see if you think—I want all you boys to *think*—that all would be confusion if we had no rules and regulations by which we all agree to be bound.

'You've seen the policeman keeping order at Ludgate Circus, haven't you? Those who are driving or riding have to keep on the left-hand side. Just fancy what our crowded thoroughfares would be like if all the horses and vehicles went whichever way they chose! What delays! What accidents! Well, you all see how even that one simple little rule leads to order. So whether it is the family, the school, or the State, we must all learn to *obey*.

'But things are very different in the old days. The good of the greater number was not considered then. No, the strongest had it all his own way. So never forget that you should all be very grate-

ful to the great champions who have suffered centuries ago in order to secure freedom for the greater number—Simon de Montfort—never forge him—the founder of——?’

‘Parliaments.’

‘Next verse.’

‘Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise.’

‘Well, now, what does it mean: honour thy father and mother?’

‘Magnify them, make them big——’

‘Yes; first we should obey them; then we should respect and *honour* them. *How* can we honour them?’

‘Help them if they are in distress.’

‘Why?’

‘Because they have helped us, fed us, and clothed us——’

‘Yes, and always think of that when, for some reason or other, you feel inclined to dispute their authority. Never begin a family quarrel. Never mind a hot word. You never know the end of a squabble. You will be the happier—and “it will be well for thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.” Fourth verse.’

‘And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’

‘ You see, St. Paul also was careful to point out that parents must also do their duty to their children. True, no wise parent will give a child its own way, even when it is small, certainly not when it is bigger. Give it everything it cries for, whether it is something to eat, or to wear, or to play with. Wise parents will soon find out a child’s faults, and it is their duty to check them, to warn them against dangers. But not violently, not with anger, so as to provoke them to wrath, and create a defiant spirit. Ah! it is very necessary to be careful with boys like you, who think you are men already, and know everything. No, no; it is no laughing matter. You are just going to leave school and go to work, a good many of you; but don’t think you can judge for yourselves of what is good and what is bad. And if your parents advise you, listen to them. This is the time of all others when you want good advice. Now, I very often am much pained at the night classes to see some of my old boys, boys who have been with me for years, changed morally, intellectually, from their contact with the world. Their manners are rougher, their appearance is often untidy, they are clownish, clumsy, rude. It makes me very sad to see that. What can be more disheartening? People can judge of you, and often do, by very small things. Some time ago an employer came to me, and asked me to

recommend him a boy. Then he looked round and happened to see one of you who was very neat, very clean, and he walked smartly, and with his head well up. "That's the boy for me," said he. "When he's finished his schooling send him along to me." He picked him out of a score, you see, in a moment. On the other hand, I often see that a boy is improving himself at those evening classes; and nothing gives me greater pleasure than to find that he doesn't roam about the streets in bad company when his work is done, but reads good books and mixes with good people, and strives to improve his condition. I wish there were more of you like that, with power to resist bad companions, evil ways, and silly pleasure. Verse five.'

'Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ.'

'Who *are* servants?'

'Those who serve, those who administer to the wants of others.'

'Tell me any people who are servants.'

'Every one.'

'Who isn't a servant? Ah! I don't think much of a man who lives entirely for himself, who thinks he is entirely sufficient; shop boys, errand boys, teachers, clergymen, every one is a servant. Tell me the name of a good old servant of all of us

who has not long ago retired to rest after all his work—you—you.'

'Mr. Gladstone.'

'Yes, even the Prime Minister is a servant, and a very hard-working servant too. But if he'd liked, Mr. Gladstone could have lived for himself. Then you all know there is a great question which every one is talking about. Crete; yes, that's right. Well, who is working very hard indeed to help to settle *that* matter?

'Lord Salisbury. Yes, *he* is a servant too, of yours and of all of us; and if he tries to go against the wishes of the people, he very soon finds out that he *is* a servant, and holds his office from the hands of the——'

'PEOPLE!'

'So you see we are all of us servants; even the Queen is a servant. And you all know very well that, when you go out to work for your living, *you* will have to obey those who employ you, and try to win their esteem, or you will very soon find out that you *are* servants. There is an old Persian proverb which I have often told you of: "A stone fit for the builder does not lie long on the road." We are all stones, and people soon find out what sort of stones we are. When you boys go out to work remember that. At first the builder may take no heed to you. You may be very insignificant,

an errand boy, perhaps a very tiny stone, but you'll find if you do your duty somebody will find it out. Don't seek to attract attention by cringing or currying favour, or tale-bearing, but by doing your duty honestly, without fear or favour. In your spare time try and improve yourselves, to raise yourselves above the animal. So many boys from forgetting this, by exercising no self-denial, do grow into animals, dirty in appearance, dirty in mind, degraded; they forget all they have learnt, they never try to raise themselves. And when they are grown up they are only fit for hewers of wood and drawers of water. They have to do the dirty work of the world, the dustmen. Mind, I don't mean you're to be ashamed of doing hard work; not at all, but whatever your work may be, to strive and do it thoroughly, in singleness of heart. Verse six.'

'Not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.'

'“Not with eye service,” not outside show, not ——'

'When your master's looking.'

'Well, you've all heard of the “British workman”—the man who only does his duty when he's watched. A nice sort of workman he is. But the master soon finds him out, and when the frost comes, or slack trade, what happens?'

‘He gets thrown out of work.’

‘Of course he does, for his is only——’

‘Eye service.’

‘Well, how are we to work?’

‘As the servants of Christ.’

‘Yes, we are all servants of God, doing His will from our hearts. We are all enrolled in one great army, and are wearing God’s uniform. And we must all honour it, respect it, and remember that we have not only to do our duty to our earthly master, but to our heavenly Master. “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” Shut up your Bibles, boys. Now you see what a number of good lessons we have learnt from those few verses which St. Paul sent to the Ephesians. Never forget them; think over them; remember we must all think of the good of the greatest number. The time will come when you will have houses or rooms of your own with all the rights of an English citizen, which have been won for us by our forefathers, the long roll of great men and women. How will you exercise that right?’

‘BY VOTING.’

‘Yes. And it will be your duty to choose a County Councillor, or a Member of Parliament. And never forget that a vote is not a thing to be

esteemed lightly ; it has cost a deal to get it for you. It is a great privilege ; votes are educating you now. So when you vote don't go like a flock of sheep, but think ; vote with intelligence. When you go to meetings, don't believe all the last speaker says ; wait for the other side of the question, and then go home and THINK.'

And thus endeth the first lesson. The next morning Mr. Ellson himself took a class of little boys whose age was about nine or ten. It was very simple, full of feeling, very sympathetic, and, like the preceding lesson, was followed with close attention.

'One day Christ was talking to His disciples, when a certain young lawyer stood up and tempted Him. When the Jews first became a nation, Moses, inspired by God, gave them hundreds of laws ; you all know the Commandments ; there were ten of them, which we are all taught to keep even to this day, though it is hundreds of years since God gave them to Moses. Well, this young lawyer was learned in the laws, and therefore he was very well qualified to stand up and ask Christ questions concerning them. "Master," he said—Christ was a Master, remember ; he was God and Jesus at the same time—"Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?" He was anxious, you see, to learn how he could get to heaven, the place of eternal

happiness, the place of God. The lawyer knew very well that he was, like all of us, only to remain on this world for a few years ; he knew that we all die, just as we are all born ; and now he was very troubled to know how he could inherit, that is, have for his own, eternal life. "What is written in the Law?" said Christ, in answer. "How readest thou it?" Then the lawyer replied: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind ; and thy neighbour as thyself." And Jesus said, "Thou hast answered right ; this do, and thou shalt live."

'Now, the lawyer was evidently a good living sort of man ; what did he say, now? He was willing to justify himself, and he was still in doubt. "Who is my neighbour?" he asked. He understood that he owed all to God, who had given him life, and food, and a beautiful world to live in ; but his neighbour, who was he? So our Saviour set to work, and told him one of those stories with a meaning ; what do we call them ?

'Parables.'

'And this was the parable of the——'

'Good Samaritan.'

'Yes, and this is the story. A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, another city

some twenty miles away, and he fell among thieves, and they stripped him of his raiment and left him half-dead by the wayside. Then came along a priest, but though he saw the wounded man he paid no heed to him. Then came also a Levite, who was a sort of an inferior priest—they both should have known better—and he passed by too. But presently a Samaritan came along, and he at once had compassion upon him. He puts you in mind of our Saviour, doesn't he, who loved the poor, the widows, those who were in pain and sorrow. And the Samaritan bound up the man's wounds, just as our Saviour binds up our wounds—soothes us when we are in trouble, despondent, downhearted, melancholy. The Samaritan then put him on his own beast and walked beside him, and paid for his food and lodgings at an inn, where he left him, promising to call on his return journey and pay any further money that the landlord might have expended upon the wounded man. Now, which of these three men had regarded him as a neighbour ?'

'The Samaritan.'

'Yes, "he that showed mercy. Go thou and do likewise," said Christ to the lawyer. What Christ meant was that we should regard everyone as our neighbours—whether they are white or black, rich or poor, fellow-citizens or foreigners,

because we are all the children of one Father, all brethren, all one great family, and God is the Father of us all—God who has given us the sun, the sky, the crops, this beautiful world. Do we believe that sort of thing nowadays? Who will tell me?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Why do you say so?’

‘We all give something to the Indian Famine.’

‘Yes, although India is thousands of miles away, we are all subscribing money to help to feed them, because——’

‘They are our neighbours.’

‘Now, who can tell me any other way in which we help our neighbours?’

‘Hospitals, sir!’

‘Quite right, if we are poor, and we fall ill, we can go to the hospital without paying anything at all. Or if we break a leg, or an arm, or are burnt, or are run over, or have an accident of any sort, the hospital will help us. But hospitals cost money, which has been given from time to time by many good people. They needn’t have done it, you know, but they did it because they thought of——’

‘Their neighbours.’

‘Then if we’re very poor we can get relief. Where from—yes, the Union—not a very pleasant place to go to, is it? But still our neighbours see that we do not starve. Can any of *you* do anything

to help your neighbours? You are very young and very little, I know.'

'Lead a blind man, sir.'

'Decidedly; that would be helping your neighbour.'

'Lead a child across the street.'

'Yes, certainly; we often see a policeman do that, if he's a good fellow, especially at a crowded crossing. Any other way?'

'Be kind to the deaf and dumb.'

'Surely, I know you are, for I've watched you in the playground.' (There is a large deaf and dumb 'centre' here.) 'And you can also be kind to your little brothers and sisters. Now, most of you know that this school is built upon the foundation of a prison, don't you? But it wasn't wanted. Who knows another prison that's been pulled down lately?'

'Millbank.'

'Yes, that's going to be a picture gallery, a much nicer building than an ugly prison. Well, and here, instead of a prison, this fine school was built, where all you children are taught without costing your parents a penny. Now, why is that? Because twenty-five years ago we all made up our minds that the poor were our neighbours, and wanted help, and we acted up to it, and have already begun to get the benefit of it. Schools are

cheaper than prisons, even if we look at it in that way. Pay regard to your teachers, that is your duty to your neighbours who help to pay for your education. Never stop away from school, learn all you can, be good boys, and in a very few years more prisons will be pulled down, and more schools will rise in their places.'

On a third morning I went into the lowest class, where the boys are mostly struggling with words of two syllables. But they all knew what a parable was.

'An earthly story with a Heavenly meaning, sir,' came the answer from at least four of them. Then the teacher (Mr. Martin) went on to tell the parable of the man who went out into the fields to sow, very simply. And then Mr. Ellson came in, and took the end of the chapter.

'After this Christ bade His disciples to take boat and sail to the other side of the lake. "You go before me and I will follow you," He said. So they took a boat and sailed away. They were nearly all fishermen, and knew how to manage it very well. Presently the night came on, it grew darker and darker, the wind rose, the waves rose, too, and the disciples, although they were fishermen, became afraid. But suddenly they saw Christ walking towards

them on the waters. Who can tell me how it was He did not sink ? ’

‘ All because He was not frightened. ’

‘ Please, He was the Lord. ’

‘ Yes. Christ could do anything He liked. He could *walk* on the water ; He could sink, if He chose. However, He wished to walk, but when His disciples saw the figure on the water they were more afraid than ever. What did they think it was ? ’

‘ They thought it was a ghost. ’

‘ Well, perhaps they believed in ghosts. At any rate, it was extremely wonderful to see a figure of some kind walking on the water. But Christ spoke to them, and as soon as they heard His voice they knew who it was, and then one of them wanted to walk on the water too. Did he manage to do so ? ’

‘ Yes ; and then he began to sink. ’

‘ Yes, at first he was all right, for Christ told him to come. But then he began to think to himself, “ Shall I be able to manage it ? ” No ; and he took fright, and he began to sink, because he had——’

‘ Lost faith. ’

‘ Yes, although Christ had distinctly told him to come, his courage deserted him, and he thought

that he was going to be drowned. And was he drowned ?'

'No, sir.'

'Why ?'

'Because Christ got hold of his hand and helped him.'

'Yes, and took him on board the boat. And then Christ stopped the storm. What did he say ?'

'“Peace, be still.”'

'Yes, he had only to speak to the waves, and though they were very high, and threatened to stove the boat in, they went down at once, and all was——'

'Peace.'

'Yes, there is a heavenly meaning to all this story, though. The stormy water means the troubles of life—sickness, sorrow, death, money losses, bad times, want of work—all sorts of trouble which all of us know very well, don't we ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'But we must not lose our FAITH in God, though the troubles are ever so bad, though the sea is mountains high. We must never forget, like Peter did when he thought he was going to sink, that our Saviour is by our side, watching us, thinking of us, ready to help us, Christ our Saviour. Though we can't see Him, He is there.'

Well, if we can't see Him, how can we reach Him ?
How can we make him hear us ?'

' By prayer, sir.'

' Need we say it loud ?'

' No, sir.'

' No, at any time, in any place, we can
always pray to Him to help us, if we have——

' FAITH.'

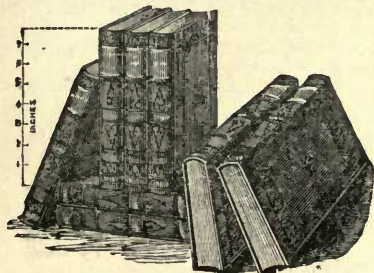
And these are the godless School Boards !

THE END

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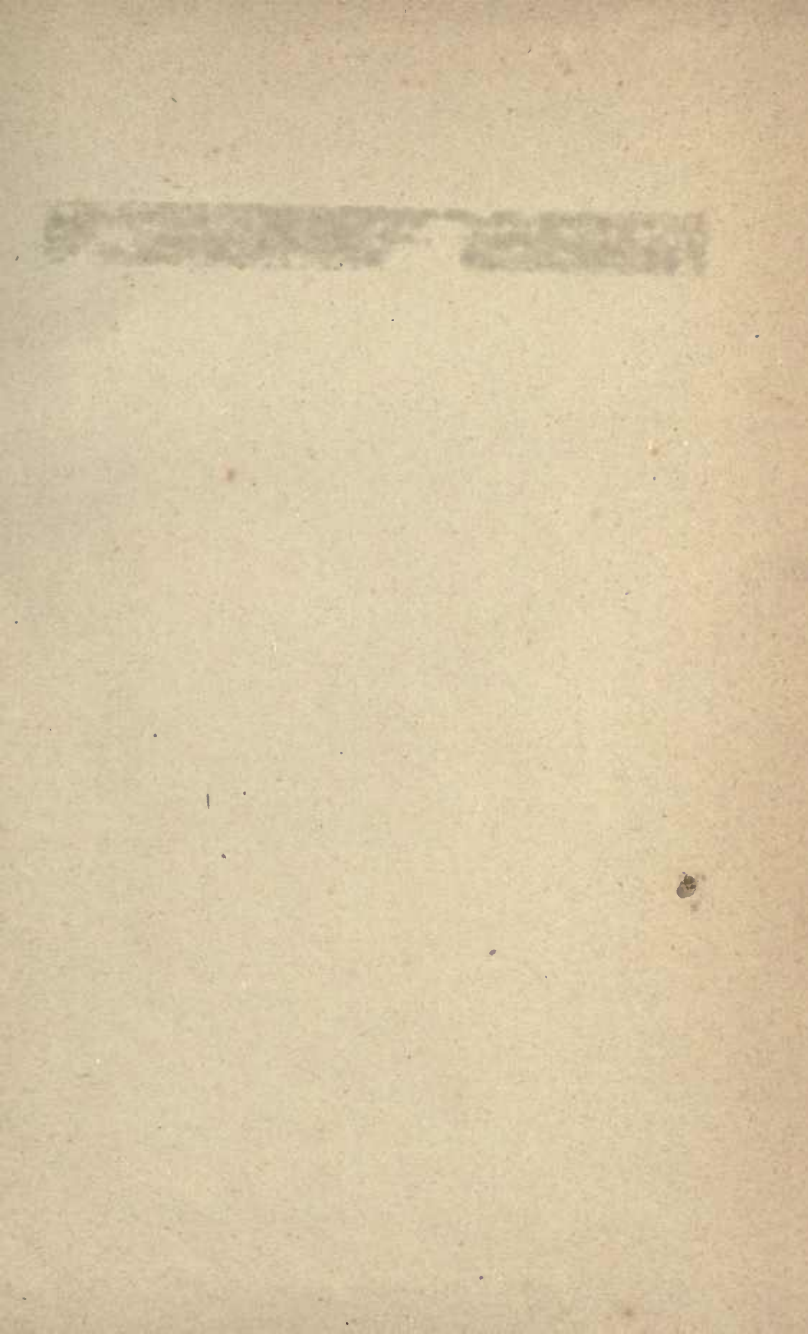
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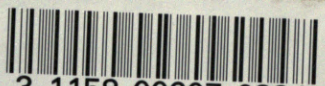
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